THE CHURCH IN COUNCIL

CONCILIAR MOVEMENTS, RELIGIOUS PRACTICE
AND THE PAPACY FROM NICAEA TO VATICAN II

NORMAN TANNER

I.B. TAURIS

Norman Tanner is Professor of Church History at the Gregorian University in Rome. A medieval historian of international stature, he is best known for his groundbreaking books on the great ecumenical councils of the Christian Church. He is in addition the author of *The Church in the Later Middle Ages* (I.B.Tauris' *History of the Christian Church* series, 2008) and *The Ages of Faith: Popular Religion in Late Medieval England and Western Europe* (I.B.Tauris, 2009).

INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY OF HISTORICAL STUDIES

THE CHURCH IN COUNCIL

Conciliar Movements, Religious Practice and the Papacy from Nicaea to Vatican II

NORMAN TANNER

Contents

Introduction

This work contains a second collection of my earlier publications. The first collection was published by I.B.Tauris and Co. Ltd in 2009 under the title: *The Ages of Faith: Popular Religion in Late Medieval England and Western Europe.* I am most grateful to I.B.Tauris for accepting this work as well as for the fine production and marketing of the earlier volume.

Church councils are the focus of this second collection. They have been at the forefront of my academic study for a long time, through my editing *The Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (1990) and thereafter. Five articles on church councils were included in *The Ages of Faith* and this volume gives me the opportunity to include the other significant publications in this field that can be readily reproduced. A full list of the relevant books and articles may be found in the Appendix (pp. 215–217).

The first piece in this volume – *Is the Church too Asian?* – reproduces the published version of the Placid Lectures (2001), which were delivered at Dharmaram College, Bangalore, India. The work seeks to counter the modern perception that Christianity is too Western by arguing, rather, that the Christian church of the first millennium – at least as represented by the ecumenical councils of the time – was more Eastern than Western. This Eastern foundation, it is maintained, has remained with Christianity ever since.

The second piece – *Was the Church too Democratic?* – is based on the Bishop Jonas Thaliath Endowment Lectures, which were delivered in Rome in 2003. It confronts another controversial topic through the prism of church councils, namely the church and democracy. The main theses advanced are that during the first millennium AD, church councils were ahead of their time in consultative procedures and that this tradition resurfaced vitally during the second Vatican Council (1962–65).

These two pieces, which were originally published in the form of short books, constitute around half the text of the book.

The rest of the volume comprises nine articles on various aspects of conciliar history. They are printed in the chronological order of their original publication.

The first of the nine, 'The African Church and the First Five Ecumenical Councils', outlines how African bishops and theologians played a major role in the early councils and thereby made a decisive contribution to the development of the Christian church. In this way the article seeks to redress the lament that the Church is too European and Western, by highlighting the African contribution. The article complements the booklet *Is the Church too Asian?*

The second article, 'The Eucharist in the Ecumenical Councils', was based on a lecture given at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2000. It retraces conciliar teaching on the eucharist from Nicaea I in 325 to Vatican II. While the early councils were concerned primarily with the people present at the eucharist, medieval councils as well as Trent focused more on the presence of Christ and on the priest. The second Vatican Council revisited the early Church's interest in the congregation, but with somewhat different emphases.

The two publications of 2002 are 'Mary in the ecumenical councils of the Church' and 'Historiography of the council (Vatican II) in the Anglophone world'. The former traces teaching on Mary through the councils, most notably in the Council of Ephesus's proclamation of Mary as *Theotokos* (Mother of God) and in the chapter on Mary in Vatican II's decree on the Church. The second article examines the reception of Vatican II in English-speaking countries, principally the UK and USA.

'Ecumenism and the Ecumenical Councils' looks at the present quest for reunion among Christians and seeks to draw inspiration from previous councils. The approach is both theological and commonsense. Unity within the early church should not be exaggerated; Christians then were quite a fractious body of believers. In many ways Christians are more united today than they have ever been before, except perhaps briefly after Pentecost. Full unity may be the ideal, but in the meantime imperfect unity should be appreciated and treasured.

There are three publications for the year 2004. The first is *The Book of the Councils: Nicaea I to Vatican II*. The article begins thus: 'The ecumenical and general councils of the Church have produced arguably the most important documents of Christianity after the Bible'. Thereafter an attempt is made to justify this challenging statement. Second is 'Ecumenical Councils and non-Christian Religions', which examines the changing emphases of the councils towards other faiths, including Vatican II's positive appreciation. Third, 'The image of John XXIII and Paul VI in the Anglo-Saxon World during and after Vatican II' looks at appreciation for the two popes on the part of people in English-speaking countries – principally the UK and USA – and, reciprocally, the popes' understanding of the Anglophone world.

   The final contribution is entitled 'Greek Metaphysics and the Language of the Early Church Councils: Nicaea I (325) to Nicaea II (787)'. First published in 2009, the article applauds early Christians for their courage in embracing Greek, the *lingua franca* of the time. Then, focusing on various key words in the creeds and other doctrinal statements of the early councils, the article argues that these councils, rather than being seduced by Greek philosophy, fashioned a theological vocabulary that expressed with remarkable fidelity and ingenuity the key concepts of the Christian message.

The Mediterranean World
300–1600

N

Caspian Sea

Black Sea

Mediterranean Sea

Atlantic Ocean

Antioch

Jerusalem

CONSTANTINOPLE

CHALCEDON

NICAEA

EPHESUS

Athens

Alexandria

Budapest

Vienna

Split

Cologne

Paris

London

CONSTANCE

TRENT

Milan

FLORENCE

ROME

BASEL

VIENNE

LYONS

Madrid

Toledo

Carthage

References

Ⱶ The Roman Empire

– – – Division Between the Eastern and Western Empire

● Places of the 21 ecumenical/ general councils

○ Other Places

0   250   500 km.

Loyalties during the Papal Schism
1378−1417

Atlantic

Ocean

Avignon

Rome

Mediterranean Sea

N

0   250   500 km.

References

Avignonese obedience

Romanist obedience

Areas of contested obedience or switched obedience

Muslim territory

BOOKLETS

BOOKLET 1

Is the Church too Asian?
Reflections on the Ecumenical Councils

Contents

Preface

The text of this booklet is a revised version of the Placid Lectures given – under the same title – at Chavara Institute of Indian and Interreligious Studies (CIIS) in Rome in December 2001. I am grateful to Professor Thomas Aykara CMI, Director of the Institute, for the honour of inviting me to give the lectures. I thank him, Fr Justin Koyipuram, Procurator-General of the Congregation of Mary Immaculate (CMI), and other members of the Congregation, as well as all those who attended the lectures, for their warm welcome and hospitality and for their many helpful comments and questions during the discussion time that followed each lecture.

Abbreviations

Alberigo, *Vatican II*	G. Alberigo (ed.), *History of Vatican II*, 3 of 5 vols so far (Maryknoll and Leuven, 1995–). Page references for vols 4 and 5 are to the Italian version, *Storia del concilio Vaticano II*, 5 vols (Bologna and Leuven, 1995–2001), abbreviated to: Alberigo, *Vaticano II.*
Decrees	*Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, N. Tanner (ed.), *2* vols (London and Georgetown, 1990).
DTC	*Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* (Paris, 1903–50).
EEC	Encyclopedia of the Early Church, A. Di Berardino (ed.), 2 vols (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1992).
Grillmeier, *Christ*	A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 2 vols so far (London: Mowbrays, 1975–).
Jedin, *History*	H. Jedin (ed.), *History of the Church*, 10 vols (London: Burns & Oates, 1980).
Kelly, *Creeds*	J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd edn (London: Longman, 1972).
ODB	*The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A.P. Kazhdan, 3 vols (New York and Oxford, 1991).
Tanner, *Councils*	N. Tanner, *The Councils of the Church: A Short History* (New York: Crossroad, 2001).

Introduction

The claim 'The Church is too Western' has been familiar to us for some time. Indeed, the terrible events in New York and Washington in September 2001, and some of the responses to them, heightened for many the perceived dichotomy between East and West. A largely non-Christian Asia, it is argued, has been struggling, at times violently, against the dominance and arrogance of the Christian West. On the one hand we are aware of Christianity's roots in Asia. Christ and his disciples were Asians; the early Church was predominantly Asian. On the other hand, so the argument goes, the Church was quickly taken over by Western ways of thought – notably Greek philosophy – and by Westerners. The centre of the Church moved to Rome and the West and remained there.

Dialogue between East and West, between Christianity and the other world religions of Asia, are high priorities of our time. Fr Placid Podipara CMI, in whose honour this lecture series is named, was well known for his promotion of dialogue and understanding between the religions of Asia and the West and for his initiatives in recovering the genuinely Indian features of Christianity, especially with respect to the liturgy of the Syro-Malabar rite. These essays seek to follow in his footsteps, in a small way, by examining one dimension of Asia's contribution to Christianity and thereby questioning the assumption of Western dominance over the Church. The aspect chosen is the tradition of the 21 ecumenical and general councils of the Church from Nicaea I in 325 to Vatican II in 1962–65. These great assemblies form a hugely influential chain in the history of the Church, of the undivided Church of East and West in the first millennium, and of the Western church in the second millennium. How great was the Asian contribution to them?

The Early Church

The ecumenical councils of the first millennium of Christianity are often called the seven councils of the undivided Church: before, that is, the beginning of the sad schism between the churches of East and West in the eleventh century. They are the councils of Nicaea I in 325, Constantinople I in 381, Ephesus in 431, Chalcedon in 451, Constantinople II in 553, Constantinople III in 680–1, and Nicaea II in 787.[1] The Asian contribution to them was great; in fact we may say it – or at least the Eastern contribution – was dominant.

Places

The first and most obvious point is that four of the seven councils were held in Asia: Nicaea I and II, Ephesus and Chalcedon. The other three were held in Constantinople and therefore just in Europe, if one accepts the Bosphorus as the boundary between Asia and Europe.

Here a short diversion regarding the definition of Asia is in order. We know that Asia has been understood differently in the course of history, or perhaps rather there has been a development of meaning. The word 'Asia' is ancient but its origin is unclear. *Encyclopedia Britannica* says:

> The Greeks used it to designate the lands situated to the East of their homeland. It is also believed that the name may be derived from the Assyrian *asu* meaning 'east'. Another possible explanation is that it was originally a local name given to the plains of Ephesus and gradually extended to include Anatolia (contemporary Asia Minor) . . . and the rest of the continent.[2]

Hecataeus, the Greek geographer, in his map around 500 BCE, divided the world into Europe and Asia (which included Africa). The province of Asia in the Roman Empire stretched, at its greatest extent, from the Aegean coast in

the West to a point beyond Philomelium (modern Aksehir) in the east. It was only much later, as a result of European voyages from the fifteenth century onwards, that the continent of Asia came to have its modern definition.

Throughout the period of the seven councils in question, from 325 to 787, the distinction between the mainly Greek- and Syriac-speaking East and the Latin-speaking West was more significant, at least in the eyes of those living within the Roman Empire, than that between Asia and Europe. That Constantinople, the site of three of the councils, was in the East, indeed was the capital of the eastern Empire, and lay close to if not within what was then considered to be Asia, is, therefore, more relevant to our thesis than that today it lies, renamed as Istanbul, just within the more recent definition of Europe's boundaries.

Participants

Another striking point is that the overwhelming majority of participants at all seven councils came from the East and most were Asians. At the first council, Nicaea I in 325, there were two legates of the bishop of Rome and at most half a dozen bishops from the Western church. All the other bishops whose sees are known – some 220 of the total participation of probably 250–300 bishops – were from the Eastern church, the largest group coming from within the borders of modern Turkey.[3] At Constantinople I in 381 there were no representatives of the Western church; all 150 or so bishops who attended came from dioceses in the East.[4] In effect it was a Council of the Eastern church and was promoted to ecumenical status when its creed was endorsed by the Council of Chalcedon in 451. At the other five ecumenical councils, papal legates attended but there were very few other representatives of the Western church: the large majority of bishops came from the East and most from present-day Asia.[5]

All seven councils, moreover, were summoned, presided over, either directly or through their officials, and their decrees promulgated, by the eastern emperor of the day and, in two cases, also by the empress. All of them were Europeans yet the fact that they belonged to the Greek-speaking East, either by birth and upbringing or by adoption, is perhaps more significant. Constantine I, emperor at the time of Nicaea I, was probably born at Niš (then Naisos) in modern Serbia. As a commander in the emperor Galerius's army he had travelled as far east as Persia and as emperor he moved the centre of power eastwards, towards Asia, by establishing a second capital at Constantinople, the city he named after himself. Theodosius I, a Spaniard,

was the eastern emperor at the time of the first Council of Constantinople in 381. Theodosius II, the emperor who tried to control the stormy Council of Ephesus, was a citizen of Constantinople *par excellence.* Born and brought up in the city, he lived there most of the time during his long years as emperor. By then the western Empire was in collapse and his reign illustrates well the extent to which the centre of power now lay in the East. His sister, the empress Pulcheria, who was the key organiser of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, even more so than her husband, the emperor Marcion, was also born and brought up in Constantinople and the city was her power-base, though in many ways she was pro-Western. Justinian I, who managed the ill-fated Council of Constantinople II in 553, was born at Bederiana in the Balkans and he too based himself at Constantinople during his long reign as emperor. It was likewise the capital city for Emperor Constantine VI and Empress Irene, who presided over the last two councils in question, Constantinople III in 680–81 and Nicaea II in 787.[6]

In short, the complaint of Christians in the West, regarding the location, composition and organisation of the first seven councils, might well have been, 'The Church is too Asian, or at least too Eastern'. Just the reverse of the talk today! I have not found any contemporary quotations to this effect – I would be very pleased to learn of any – but it would be surprising if this sense of imbalance did not exist. Maybe Westerners were more than usually patient and understanding. After all, they could see the western Empire had collapsed and was incapable of staging a council of the whole church even if it wanted to, whereas the eastern Empire had survived and it alone had the capacity to host an ecumenical council.

Greek Philosophy?

But what of the argument that the ecumenical councils of the early Church were dominated by Western thought and concepts, principally Greek philosophy? Before we look in detail at the creeds and other doctrinal statements issued by these councils, we should ask the preliminary question of whether Greek philosophy was basically Western and European or, rather, more Eastern and Asian. The West has, perhaps, hijacked Greek philosophy – above all the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle – into its own chariot and the surprise is that Asia and the East has not protested more. Asia has so many cultural and intellectual roots that it perhaps feels less need to be possessive about its Greek roots. Europe, on the other hand, especially Western Europe, without the richness of Asia's origins, has been desperate to find its

intellectual roots and especially since the nineteenth century secular elements, which dislike much emphasis upon Europe's Christian inspiration, have discovered these roots in classical Greek thought. The point was brought home to me starkly by the very differing entrances of Greece and my own country, Britain, to the European Economic Community (now called the European Union). Whereas Britain had to struggle for many years to be admitted to this Community, including suffering two vetoes to its membership in the 1960s, Greece was offered membership almost straightaway after applying. The argument, occasionally stated openly but more usually implicit, was that Greece must be admitted since it is the birthplace of European thought: a European Community or Union without Greece was unthinkable.

However, when we examine this thesis of the Western orientation of Greek thought and civilisation more closely, much of it disintegrates. The most obvious point is that its language was Greek, the most widespread *lingua franca* of the eastern Empire including the Asian parts of it, whereas that of the western Empire was Latin. The Greek world looked eastwards much more than westwards. It was in contact with the thought of Persia and further east, uninterested in the illiterate peoples of Western Europe. Alexander the Great campaigned eastwards as far as the Indus Valley, and south into Africa, not towards Italy or France. Athens was much closer to Aleppo and perhaps to the civilisations of the Indus valley and beyond than to Paris or London: M.L. West, Walter Burkert and other scholars have revealed much about this eastern face of Hellenism in recent years.[7] It merits further research.

Creeds and Teachings of the Councils

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that a pronounced Eastern face appears in the creeds and other statements of the seven councils in question. In the first place and very importantly, the language of all of them – both of their proceedings and of the decrees they issued – was Greek, the language of the eastern Empire.

Nicaea I

Regarding the first Council of Nicaea in 325, the origin of its creed – the first version of the Nicene Creed – is debated. However, it was surely Eastern rather than Western. Somewhere in Syria or Palestine, perhaps Jerusalem, is now thought to be the most likely place, rather than Caesarea in modern

Turkey, the see of Eusebius of Caesarea, which used to be preferred. The creed of a local church was evidently taken over by the Council of Nicaea as the core of its creed and various anti-Arian clauses were added to it.[8] The thesis that the Western bishop, Ossius of Cordoba, was largely responsible for the inclusion of the crucial word 'homoousios' (ὁμοούσιος) – asserting the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father – finds few supporters now. There was probably some Western influence upon the choice of the word. Tertullian, for example, had spoken of *unius substantiae* (though not, so far as we know, of *consubstantialis*) and Ossius may well have played a part. But the word was already in use in the east, in both theology and philosophy. Indeed, the main difficulty with it seems to have originated in Asia, namely that the word, when used to describe the relationship between Father and Son, had been condemned by the Council of Antioch in 268, in the Paul of Samosata affair, so that Nicaea had to justify itself by arguing that it was using the word in a spiritual sense of consubstantiality, rather than the material sense that, allegedly, the Council of Antioch had in mind in its condemnation. Both a Western and, more prominently, an Eastern ancestry leading to the choice of 'homoousios' seems the most likely hypothesis.[9]

The context of Nicaea's 20 disciplinary canons – the second major contribution of the council – also seems to be predominantly Asian. Most obviously, they were promulgated by a council held in Asia. As for their sources, the absence of any surviving *acta* (minutes of the meetings of the council and other contemporary background material) makes it difficult to speak with certainty but a number of the canons appear to have been based on those of earlier local councils in Asia Minor, notably the councils of Ancyra (modern Ankara) in 314 and Neocaesarea in 315/324.[10] The legislation was intended primarily for the churches of the East but it became the first code – the template – of canon law for the universal Church. It covered a wide range of issues concerning both laity and clergy: conditions for ordination, morals and status of clergy; hierarchy among bishops; baptism and eucharist; reconciliation through various forms of penance; holding of regular local councils; deaconesses; posture in prayer.[11] All this was given to the universal Church by Asia rather than the West.

Constantinople I

The second ecumenical Council of the Church, Constantinople I in 381, is known chiefly for the revised version of the Nicene Creed, which has remained until today the principal creed of all the mainstream Christian

churches. Here, too, the Asian influence is pre-eminent. First, because it retained the core of the earlier creed of Nicaea, which itself was essentially an Asian creed, as mentioned. Secondly, the main addition was the section on the Holy Spirit and this was the result of an Eastern and partly Asian controversy, that involving the Pneumatomachi or Macedonians. Macedonius was a priest in Constantinople and bishop of the city intermittently from 344 until his final deposition in 360 and he became the leader of the party that denied full divinity to the Holy Spirit. 'Pneumatomachi', meaning 'enemies of the Spirit', was a name given to them by their opponents. The party was based around Constantinople and neighbouring areas on both sides of the Bosphorus. Another important leader of the party was Eleusius, bishop of Cyzicus on the Asian side of the Sea of Marmara. As with Nicaea I, surviving *acta* for Constantinople I are lacking and therefore it is difficult to speak with certainty about why changes were made to the creed. Nevertheless it seems clear that the much fuller treatment of the Holy Spirit, asserting her divinity and equality with Father and Son, was added as a result of the controversy, to refute the Macedonians.[12]

Asia, moreover, cannot be blamed for the only later change to the creed, the infelicitous addition of the *Filioque* clause (meaning 'and from the Son'), asserting that the Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father. It was introduced without the consent of the Eastern church or that of an ecumenical council. Its origins are unambiguously in the West, first in sixth-century Spain, crucially in the profession of faith issued by the third Council of Toledo in 589, then in the realms of Charlemagne in the eighth and ninth centuries, in both cases in order to counter residual Arianism, and later with papal support throughout the West.[13]

Ephesus

The third ecumenical council, Ephesus in 431, brings us to the controversy between the schools of Antioch and Alexandria regarding Christ's humanity and divinity.[14] Antioch lies squarely in Asia, in Turkey today, and had a long-standing tradition as an intellectual centre of the early Church, culminating with Theodore of Mopsuestia, the theologian and biblical exegete who died in 428 – three years before the beginning of the council. As well as an intellectual centre, the city was one of the four great sees or patriarchates of the early Church, alongside Rome, Constantinople and Alexandria. The exact relationship between Theodore and Nestorius, who was the immediate cause of the Council of Ephesus, is unclear. Nestorius was

a native of Syria and became a monk in Antioch, where he probably studied under Theodore; certainly he regarded Theodore as his inspiration. After succeeding as bishop of Constantinople in 428, Nestorius soon began to attack the custom of giving Mary the title of *Theotokos* (Mother of God), which had a long and popular tradition in many places and especially in the city of Alexandria.

Alexandria is in Egypt and therefore an African city. Yet at the time we are considering its situation in the eastern, Greek-speaking half of the Roman Empire was more central to its identity than being in Africa. As its name suggests, the city had been founded by the Greek emperor Alexander the Great in the fourth century BC and it looked eastwards, into the Greek-speaking and Asian worlds, much more than westwards. Even after Hecataeus, who included all of Africa within Asia, as mentioned, some geographers regarded the River Nile and its delta as the border between Asia and Africa, and included Alexandria within Asia because it lay in the delta area, albeit on the western edge. Alexandria had an even older and richer intellectual tradition, both Christian and otherwise, than Antioch.

How far East and into Asia can we push both Antioch and Alexandria? I am no expert on this important topic and the issues involved often seem elusive, though considerable research has been done on them and more clearly needs to be done. We know something about the connections between early Christianity and the religions of the East, even though the New Testament says little about them, and it is clear that links continued into the time of the Council of Ephesus and beyond, even though Christians seem to have been keen, on the whole, to preserve the distinctiveness of their religion and to present it as uncontaminated by other religions. It is noticeable that the most influential and implacable 'Nestorians', at least in the eyes of the Alexandrians at the second ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 553, as we shall see, all came from further East: Theodore, bishop of Mopsuestia, mentioned above, Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrhus in Syria, and Ibas, bishop of Edessa, who takes us into the Persian world. The remarkable spread of the Syriac (Nestorian) church into Persia and central Asia, Tibet and China, also shows an Eastern and Asian orientation. In south-east Asia, there are signs of Syriac Christian presence in the Malay-Indonesian region in the seventh century.[15] Peter Brown and S. Lieu have urged us to think of a more Eastern centre to early Christianity through their studies of Manichaeism, which must be seen within a Christian context. Mani (executed in 274/7) came from southern Mesopotamia and spoke of himself as belonging to the 'land of Babylon'. He claimed to be an apostle of Jesus Christ and his movement was

described as a 'Christian heresy' by Ambrosiaster in the early fourth century. Eusebius of Caesarea, writing about the same time, also saw the movement, which he described as 'a poisonous snake entering the Roman world from barbarous Persia', as much influenced by Christianity. It became a form of 'crypto-Christianity'. The early centre of the movement lay on the borders of the Roman and Persian empires and from there it spread both eastwards as far as China and westwards into many parts of the Roman Empire, often following the routes of the silk trade, as Lieu has pointed out.[16] Alexandria was a great metropolis whose trading links were principally eastwards, certainly as far as India. It therefore seems likely that its intellectuals had some knowledge, however imperfect, of the Hindu scriptures, of Buddhism, and of the other great religions of the East. One of the Antiochene school's criticisms of Mary's title of 'Mother of God' was that it seemed to compromise Christianity too much with the pagan religions of Egypt and the East, to make of her a goddess.

The Council of Ephesus may appear a defeat for Asian theology (Antioch) at the hands of Africa (Alexandria). Nestorius was condemned and deposed as bishop of Constantinople; Cyril of Alexandria and Mary's title of *Theotokos* were vindicated. But this is an oversimplification. First, because Antiochene theology recovered the initiative, notably at the subsequent councils of Chalcedon and Constantinople III. Secondly, there was the rapid and extensive spread of Christianity eastwards through the Nestorian churches, though sadly they lost communion with the main body of the Church. And thirdly, because Alexandria must be seen as a city of the eastern Empire in close contact with the world of Asia.

Chalcedon

Chalcedon, the place of the fourth ecumenical council, also lies in Asia.[17] Renaming means that the town, once a neighbour of Constantinople, on the southern shore of the Bosphorus, is today a suburb of Istanbul called Kadiköy. The Asian nature of the council is reinforced by the provenance of the bishops attending – the overwhelming majority were from the East, the large majority from Asia, as mentioned – and by its endorsement of the Antiochene teaching of two distinct natures in Christ, human and divine, against the monophysitism of Alexandria. The council's 'Definition of Faith', in which this and the earlier teaching of Nicaea I, Constantinople I and Ephesus was set out, is perhaps the most authoritative and influential statement of the Church outside of the Scriptures. It was the seal of doctrinal development

in the early Church and has remained a guiding principle for most Christian churches ever since.

Chalcedon was crucial, too, for authority in the Church. It defined the status and the list of ecumenical councils and thereby established ecumenical councils as the most important institution for the Church's future development. Before Chalcedon, Nicaea I was recognised as special and of universal authority, even though it was not always referred to as 'ecumenical'; but Constantinople I was seen rather as a local eastern synod and the status of the controversial Council of Ephesus was still much debated. Chalcedon, in its 'Definition of Faith', mentioned these and only these three previous councils, giving them the title of 'ecumenical', which henceforth became a technical term for councils representing the whole Church and therefore of universal authority, as distinct from regional, diocesan and other councils with only a limited mandate. Nicaea I was confirmed again; Constantinople I was effectively promoted to the status of an ecumenical council because its revised version of the Nicene Creed was endorsed for the whole Church; and the disputed Council of Ephesus was approved. Some other candidates for ecumenicity, moreover, were ruled out, either explicitly or implicitly. In particular, the decisions of the so-called 'Robber council' of Ephesus, or Ephesus II, held in 449, were overturned.

The predominantly Asian complexion of the Council of Chalcedon wrecks the argument that theology and Church order have been imposed upon the universal Church by the West. On the contrary, they were given to the Church, in this crucial council, principally by Asia.

Constantinople II and III

The fifth and sixth ecumenical councils, Constantinople II in 553 and Constantinople III in 680–81, follow on from Chalcedon. They continued the debate about Christ's humanity and divinity. Constantinople II saw a reversal for the school of Antioch inasmuch as the main act of the council was to condemn three leading Antiochene theologians: Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrrhus and Ibas of Edessa, mentioned earlier. The condemnation, known as 'The Sentence Against the Three Chapters', was imposed upon the council and pushed through by the emperor Justinian, against the better judgement of most church leaders, including Pope Vigilius, especially because all three men were long since dead and the previous Council of Chalcedon had chosen not to condemn them. In this sense the council cannot be said to represent the wisdom of the whole Church. Justinian's aim was to

placate the Monophysites of Egypt and to regain their loyalty to the Empire and in this, sadly, he was unsuccessful as the Coptic church continued on its path into schism.[18]

Constantinople III, however, confirmed Chalcedon and continued further in the Antiochene direction. It rejected the monothelite tendency of the Alexandria school, which taught a single will in Christ in accordance with his one nature and one person or hypostasis, and affirmed instead two wills, one human and the other divine, following Christ's two natures as Son of God and Son of man.[19] The two most important theologians who prepared the way for the teaching of the council had strong Asian connections. They were Sophronius, patriarch of Jerusalem (634–38), who was born in Damascus and lived for some years in a monastery in Jerusalem before he became patriarch; and Maximus the Confessor (580–662), a disciple of Sophronius who lived in his entourage for a time and was born, according to the biography by his contemporary George of Resaina (a hostile source but concrete in detail), near Lake Tiberias in Galilee, the son of a Samaritan merchant and a Persian slave girl.[20]

Nicaea II

Nicaea II in 787, the last of the councils recognised as ecumenical by both East and West, turned to another topic, religious art. In this case, too, both the controversy and the solution came principally from Asia. Thus, almost all the leading figures on both sides of the controversy came from Asia Minor (modern Turkey) or Syria: notably the Byzantine rulers of the Isaurian dynasty, most of whom were iconoclasts except for the Empress Irene, who played a decisive role in the iconophile victory at the council. There was an iconoclast movement in seventh century Armenia and in the early eighth century several bishops in Asia Minor, notably Constantine of Nakoleia and Thomas of Claudiopolis, condemned the veneration of images. The Council of Hieria in 754, the high point in iconoclast fortunes, was held in Asia, in the palace of Hieria near Chalcedon. On the iconophile side, its leading theologian John Damascene (*c.* 675–749/54) was born in Damascus in Syria and became a monk in St Sabas monastery near Jerusalem where he wrote his treatises. The source of the controversy, moreover, lay partly in other religions with Asian origins: Manichaeism, discussed earlier, according to which anything material – therefore all art, including religious art – was seen as part of the evil principle; also Judaism and Islam, with their abhorrence of any representation of the divine. Iconoclasts were influenced by these arguments

and by a desire not to offend Jews and Muslims in the hope – still alive in the eighth century – that they might convert *en masse* to Christianity. The council, however, voted to defend religious art and so ensured another gift of inestimable value from Asia to the universal Church.[21]

Western Influence in a Minor Key

Another way of looking at the predominantly Eastern and Asian contribution to the first seven ecumenical councils is through the relative paucity of the contribution from the West. Confirmation of the councils' decrees by the pope, the bishop of Rome, was important – indeed essential alongside that of the other patriarchal sees – but in terms of theological input the West played a minor role. The possible influence of Tertullian and Ossius of Cordoba upon 'homoousios' in the creed of Nicaea has been mentioned but this seems about the limit of Western influence upon the creed. There is no evidence of a Western contribution to the revised version of the creed produced by the first Council of Constantinople in 381. Regarding the Council of Ephesus, Pope Celestine I's support for Cyril of Alexandria, against Nestorius, before, during and after the council was important to the outcome but the theological controversy was essentially Eastern. It is perhaps symptomatic that Augustine of Hippo, the greatest theologian of the West in the early Church, was invited to the Council of Ephesus but died before the invitation reached him! At Chalcedon there was a more direct theological contribution from the West, the 'Tome' or letter that Pope Leo I wrote to Flavian archbishop of Constantinople. The long letter provided a theological resource for Chalcedon's 'Definition of Faith' and this was acknowledged in the Definition. On the other hand, the council assembled, at the insistence of the Empress Pulcheria, rather against the wishes of Pope Leo, who considered his letter to Flavian to be sufficient to resolve the dispute and therefore judged the council to be unnecessary. The council, moreover, promulgated the Definition as its own document even while it acknowledged Leo's Tome as an important contribution to it.[22]

Constantinople II was convened by the emperor Justinian against the better judgement of Pope Vigilius, as mentioned earlier, and the Western contribution to the council was small. The role of the West in both Constantinople III and Nicaea II was more significant inasmuch as the popes of the time and the majority of the Western church supported the teachings that were endorsed by the two councils. Pope Agatho's legates played a leading role in the conduct of Constantinople III and Pope Hadrian I supported Empress

Irene in her summoning the second Council of Nicaea in 787 and her conduct of it. Both councils, nevertheless, were dealing with theological controversies whose foci and solutions lay primarily within the Eastern church and only very secondarily in the Western.[23]

Mentality of the Decrees

A final point is that the mentality of the councils' decrees, it seems to me, is more Eastern than Western. Sometimes it is argued that the councils imposed upon the universal Church a mentality that is rigid, analytic and abstract, typically Western. Yet a closer look at the decrees suggests almost the opposite. Here we return to the knotty question of whether Greek thought, which certainly much influenced the decrees, was more Eastern or Western. In two respects, it seems to me, the decrees reveal an Eastern face.

First, they display a cyclical view of life more than the linear and developing one traditionally associated with the West. This reflection strikes me, yet I do not have the knowledge to back it up properly, so it is left with you unexplored.

Secondly, there is space and flexibility within the language of the decrees. Here I feel confident to say a little more. This space and flexibility in the language means that the decrees are better seen as signposts pointing to open fields and mountains, warning too of false trails, rather than as the batons of policemen herding people into prisons – as sometimes they are portrayed and hence rejected in the cause of liberation from Western colonial theology. There seems to me an inbuilt breadth within the Greek language – I hesitate to say 'poeticness' – somewhat in contrast to the more precise, legal and pragmatic Latin of the West. One only has to look up in a dictionary the three words that Christians eventually settled upon in expressing the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation to see how elastic they are: 'ousia' (οὐσία) for the one 'being' of God, 'hupostasis' (ὑπόστασις) for 'person' as in the three persons of the Trinity, and 'phusis' (Φύσις) for 'nature' as in the human and divine natures of Christ. The meanings of 'hupostasis', according to Liddell & Scott's standard *Greek-English Lexicon*, are as follows: standing under, supporting, sediment, jelly or thick soup, duration, coming into existence, origin, foundation, substructure, argument, confidence, courage, resolution, steadiness, promise, substantial nature, substantial existence, reality, wealth, property, and various others! A similarly broad range of meanings will be found under 'ousia' and 'phusis'. There is, too, much overlap between the three words. To regard them as expressing rigidly defined concepts is

manifestly wrong: there is plenty of space within them to accommodate most theological approaches.

Another reason for what might be called the 'accommodation' of the decrees is the principle of unanimity. Ecumenical councils are not like parliaments in Britain, or most national assemblies in the West today, where a majority of one is sufficient to pass a law. Rather, in these councils unanimous consent, or virtual unanimity, has traditionally been required for approval. At the first Council of Nicaea in 325 all but two bishops agreed to the creed and the principle of unanimity remained in force subsequently even if it often proved difficult to achieve. As a result, especially in doctrinal statements, formulas had to be found that were sufficiently elastic to accommodate the views of all, or almost all, sections of opinion. This was helped, in the councils of the early Church, by the fluidity of the Greek language itself, as mentioned.

In the Nicene Creed, to take but one example, the crucial word 'homoousios' (ὁμοούσιος, of the same being), to express the Son's relationship with the Father, could be and was interpreted in various ways. The search for harmony and consensus has always seemed to me a quality of the East more than of the West; another gift of Asia to the universal Church flowing from the first seven ecumenical councils.

Middle Ages and Trent

This chapter examines the long period in the middle of the Church's history that is traditionally called the Middle Ages; then the very important Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, and its aftermath. If the Middle Ages is taken in a narrow sense, from the point of view of conciliar history, as beginning with the schism between the churches of East and West in the eleventh century and continuing until the eve of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, it amounts to some 500 years or a quarter of the Church's history. During this time there were ten general councils of the Western church: the four Lateran councils in Rome in 1123, 1139, 1179 and 1215, two councils in Lyons in France in 1245 and 1274, the Council of Vienne, also in France, in 1311–12, the Council of Constance in Germany in 1414–18, the council held first in Basel in Switzerland and then transferred to Florence in Italy, which lasted from 1431 to 1445, and finally the fifth Lateran Council in Rome from 1512–17. If the Council of Trent is included, and remembering that there were long gaps without ecumenical (or general) councils both before the first Lateran Council in 1123 and after the Council of Trent, then the span is a millennium. This means that half the Church's history is squeezed into this short space. The period covered extends from after the second Council of Nicaea II in 787 – or from 871 if the disputed fourth Council of Constantinople in 869–70 is included – until some three centuries after the conclusion of Trent: the opening of the first Vatican Council in 1869.

Status of the Councils

The first question to be asked concerns the status of these eleven councils. Are they to be considered ecumenical councils or, rather, general councils of the Western (or Roman Catholic) church? It is, clearly, a very important question inasmuch as upon the answer hangs the authority to be given to

conciliar statements during this long period when the centre of the Church moved to the West. They are not, of course, regarded as ecumenical by the Orthodox Church, the oriental (orthodox) churches and the churches of the Reformation. The Orthodox Church accept as ecumenical only the first seven councils from Nicaea I to Nicaea II in 787, as mentioned in the last lecture, and does not extend the list to include the medieval councils for the obvious reason that it was not represented at them in any full sense. The oriental (orthodox) churches vary in their attitude to the early councils but they agree with the Orthodox Church regarding the medieval ones. The churches of the Reformation vary in their attitude towards the authority of councils as a whole, stressing rather the authority of Scripture. None of these churches, it seems clear, would extend the list of ecumenical councils beyond Nicaea II, both because subsequent councils lacked the participation of the Eastern church and because the churches of the Reformation tend to reject the authority of the medieval church in general, and therefore its councils, on the grounds that it was in a state of radical error.

What about the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church? The answer is not simple. Medieval people themselves, in Western Christendom, were uncertain about the status of their own councils and the weight of opinion appears to have been that they were not ecumenical. The point is brought out most clearly in the profession of faith that the Council of Constance in 1417 required of a future pope. In listing the councils that the pope should respect, the profession drew a distinction between the eight 'holy universal/ecumenical' (Latin, *universalia*) councils from Nicaea I to Constantinople IV and the subsequent 'general' (Latin, *generalia*) councils of the medieval West, the 'general councils at the Lateran, Lyons and Vienne', as it called them.[1] The distinction between ecumenical and general councils was not expanded upon but it is evident that some difference in status was intended. Other evidence, mainly from the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, showing that the medieval councils were not then usually regarded as ecumenical, has been summarised by Victor Peri and Luis Bermejo.[2] It was thought impossible to have an ecumenical council without the participation of the Eastern church.

The move to promote the medieval councils to ecumenical status came about during the Counter-Reformation. Catholic apologists sought to defend the true Church as they saw it, against the attacks of the Reformation, by an appeal to its medieval heritage. The ten councils from Lateran I to Lateran V formed an important part of this heritage. Influential in this development were Robert Bellarmine, the Jesuit theologian, and Cesare Baronius, the Oratorian scholar, both cardinals, and the so-called 'Roman edition' of

the councils, which was published in four volumes in 1608–12 under the title, *Τῶν ἁγίων οἰκουμενικῶν συνόδων τῆς καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας ἅπαντα: Concilia generalia ecclesiae catholicae Pauli V pontificis maximi auctoritate edita*.

This monumental edition, produced by scholars working in Rome under the auspices of Pope Paul V (hence its name 'the Roman edition'), attempted to decide which councils the Roman Catholic Church regarded as ecumenical (or general) and which were the decrees legitimately promulgated by them and therefore binding upon Christians. It gave to the ten medieval councils the same status as those of the early Church, calling them all 'ecumenical' in the Greek part of the book's title and 'general' in the Latin part, thus cunningly sliding over the possible distinction between the two words. It included 19 councils: the seven generally accepted councils of the undivided Church from Nicaea I to Nicaea II, Constantinople IV, the ten medieval councils from Lateran I to Lateran V (excluding the Basel part of Basel-Florence) and Trent. This list came to be widely accepted within the Roman Catholic Church and 'ecumenical' rather than 'general' became the preferred term for the councils. The list gained a semi-official status, though the issue was never defined in an authoritative way.[3]

The issue was reopened in recent times. The year 1974 saw two important contributions. First, the influential Dominican theologian Yves Congar wrote a wide-ranging article on criteria for ecumenicity in councils, in which he questioned the list of 21 ecumenical councils (the 19 from Nicaea I to Trent plus Vatican I and II) that had become traditional within the Roman Catholic Church.[4] Secondly, as part of the celebrations of the seventh centenary of the second Council of Lyons in 1274, Pope Paul VI wrote a letter to Cardinal Willebrands, president of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, in which he referred to this and the earlier medieval councils as 'general councils of the West' (*generales synodos in occidentali orbe*) rather than as ecumenical councils: a choice of language that is significant and appears intentional.[5] Since then there has been some further discussion of the issue, though not as much as might have been expected in view of its possible fruitfulness. There has been a general tendency even within the Roman Catholic communion of follow the lead of Paul VI and call the medieval councils 'general councils of the Western church' rather than cling to the ecumenical title for them. The Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) touched briefly on the issue in its first 'Agreed Statement on Authority in the Church' (1976), no. 19, mentioning obliquely the distinction between ecumenical and general councils, but unfortunately it did not develop the point.

Even if the medieval councils are seen as general councils of the Western church, rather than as fully ecumenical councils, they remain, of course, of great significance. They were the most authoritative councils in Western Christendom and it was in Western Christendom that the large majority of Christians then lived: perhaps 60 million of the total Christian population of around 80 million in the year 1300, to make a very rough guess. Certainly there was still vitality in the Eastern church and councils continued there into the modern era: for example, the councils of Constantinople in 1341 and 1351, which endorsed Hesychasm, and the councils of Jassy in 1642 and Jerusalem in 1672, which taught concerning the eucharist and the nature of the Church. If this article were properly developed, it would include a consideration of Asian influences upon these councils. With the advance of Islam, however, the Orthodox Church was for the most part a church on the defensive and developments were limited. Islam's continuing dominance of North Africa, moreover, meant there was, sadly, only a small contribution from Christianity in this region. The mainstream of life and development in the Church moved westwards and the general councils of the Western church formed the central core of conciliar development. When a schism occurs, as between the churches of East and West in the eleventh century, the clock cannot simply be stopped until the wound is healed: development continues even within a fragmented situation. Another obvious point is that the Church before the schism between East and West was far from fully united: there were major and enduring schisms after the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, for example, as well as many others. The Church has never been fully united, except perhaps for an hour after Pentecost! Councils, whether ecumenical or general, have always been held in fragmented situations: they represent at best, both in the early Church and in the Middle Ages, the mainstream of Christian tradition rather than the fullness of unity. In this sense the medieval councils are not so markedly different from those of the first millennium.

Nevertheless there is a difference and one that is important to our concerns. Hence this rather long excursus on the status of medieval councils. The difference between the early and the medieval councils, the lesser status of the latter, is important first because it means the Church today is not so definitively bound to its medieval and subsequent developments, more able to return to its Asian roots, than is often suggested. The point was made succinctly by Cardinal Ratzinger some years ago when he stated that in any reunion with the Eastern orthodox churches, nothing would be expected of them that went beyond the *status quo* at the time of the beginning of the schism in the eleventh century.[6] It is important, secondly, because medieval

people's perception of the lesser status of their own councils seems to have resulted in an unwillingness on the part of these councils to move beyond their Asian past in doctrinal matters. The councils issued relatively few decrees of a doctrinal nature and said little that was new; their focus was on Church order.

Little Development in Doctrine

The relative lack of decrees of a doctrinal nature enacted by the medieval councils is immediately evident. The first three councils in question, Lateran I in 1123, Lateran II in 1138 and Lateran III in 1179, issued no decrees of a doctrinal nature: all those enacted are of a disciplinary or moral nature, touching on the behaviour of clergy and laity and various issues of church order.[7] Of the 71 canons promulgated by the fourth Lateran Council in 1215, all but two are likewise of a disciplinary rather than a doctrinal nature. The two exceptions are the first two decrees, entitled respectively 'The Catholic Faith' and 'The error of Abbot Joachim'. The first decree contains a creed, aimed principally at the Cathars, who constituted the most serious heresy of the time. It comes closest in form to the great doctrinal statements of the early councils. In style, however, it is cumbersome, almost tortuous, and it never replaced the creeds of Nicaea I and Constantinople I, nor indeed does it seem to have had a major influence even in the medieval period. The final paragraph of the decree contains the statement, 'There is one universal church of the faithful outside of which nobody at all is saved', and the first mention in an ecumenical or general council of transubstantiation to describe Christ's presence in the eucharist: 'His body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms of bread and wine, the bread and wine having been changed in substance (*transubstantiatis*), by God's power, into his body and blood.' These two declarations are important exceptions to the present argument. They have certainly had a major influence upon ecclesiology and the doctrine of the eucharist in the Western church. The second decree of Lateran IV, 'The error of Abbot Joachim', is, however, of historical rather than theological interest. The 'error' of Joachim was not a theological heresy on his part; rather, as the council saw it, his unfairly accusing Peter Lombard, author of the *The Sentences*, of heresy regarding the Trinity. The decree is a defence of Peter Lombard more than a condemnation of the abbot.[8]

The next council, Lyons I in 1245, which was summoned by the canonist Pope Innocent IV, concerned itself mainly with issues of canon law, the deposition of the emperor Frederick II, and the crusade. There were no decrees

of a doctrinal nature.[9] Lyons II in 1274, likewise, concerned itself with canon law and the crusade.[10] It also witnessed a fleeting reunion with (part of) the Orthodox Church through the Byzantine emperor, Michael VIII Palaeologus. The profession of faith that Rome asked the Emperor Michael to make is an important theological statement, especially regarding the main issues in dispute between East and West, namely the procession of the Holy Spirit, purgatory, the seven sacraments, and papal authority. The profession, however, was never promulgated by the council and so is not, strictly speaking, a decree of the council.[11] It was, moreover, quickly rejected by the Orthodox Church as a whole and may be seen principally as a statement of the Western rather than the universal Church. Like St Augustine, who died just before Ephesus, Thomas Aquinas, the greatest of all theologians of the medieval West, died on his way to the council.

Vienne in 1311–12, the next council, issued one doctrinal decree on some rather obscure theological controversies about the soul being the form of the body, both in Christ and in ourselves, and about the effects of baptism. Its other 45 decrees concerned the sorry business of the suppression of the order of Knights Templar, the crusade, and various matters of canon law and Church order.[12] The Council of Constance (1414–18) was dominated by its healing of the schism caused by the three claimants to the papacy. It also made, however, important theological statements in its condemnations of the English and Czech theologians, John Wyclif and John Hus.[13] The Council of Basel, which saw itself as continuing the uncompleted work of Constance, became embroiled in an unsuccessful struggle for sovereignty with Pope Eugenius IV, and its main other preoccupation was with various practical reforms of the Church.

When Pope Eugenius 'transferred' the Council of Basel to the city of Florence in Italy, against the wishes of the majority, who remained at Basel, this new council was responsible for decrees of reunion with the Orthodox Church and with groups of Armenians, Copts, Syrians, Chaldeans and Maronites.[14] All these decrees contained important theological statements and the very detailed decree of reunion with the Armenians, especially its treatment of the seven sacraments, anticipated much of Trent and had an enduring influence upon Roman Catholic theology. On the other hand, they only had very limited ecumenical success. The reunion was not 'received' by the Orthodox Church and in the other cases only small groups within the churches were reunited with the Roman Catholic Church. The decrees are best seen as influential within the Roman Catholic Church rather than as of major importance for the universal Church. The limited authority of

the council, even within the Catholic Church, is illustrated by its extreme declaration of the impossibility of salvation outside the Church, which has proved an embarrassment also to Catholics and has effectively been rejected, and by its teaching on the sacrament of ordination which was overturned by Pope Pius XII. On salvation it said in the decree of reunion with the Copts:

> [The council] firmly believes, professes and preaches that all those who are outside the catholic church, not only pagans but also Jews or heretics and schismatics, cannot share in eternal life and will go into the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels, unless they are joined to the catholic church before the end of their lives.[15]

Regarding the sacrament of ordination, the council declared the following in its decree of reunion with the Armenians:

> The matter [of the sacrament of orders] is the object by whose handing over the order is conferred. So the priesthood is bestowed by the handing over of a chalice with wine and a paten with bread; the diaconate by the giving of the book of the gospels; and the subdiaconate by the handing over of an empty chalice with an empty paten on it.[16]

Yet Pope Pius XII in his apostolic constitution *Sacramentum ordinis* of 1947 abrogated this doctrine or ruling and stated: 'The matter of the holy orders of diaconate, priesthood and episcopate is the laying on of hands alone.'[17]

Finally, for the pre-Reformation period, there is the fifth Lateran Council of 1512–17. It enacted a number of decrees concerning a rival council being held at Pisa, reform of the Church, the crusade, and various practical matters, but only one decree of a more strictly theological nature: that supporting the immortality of the soul, seemingly directed against the teaching of the Italian philosopher Pomponazzi.[18]

In summary, it may be said that while the ten general councils of the medieval West, from Lateran I in 1123 to Lateran V in 1512–17, issued some decrees of a doctrinal nature, these were much less numerous and in a minor key compared with those of a disciplinary and practical nature. This is the opposite of the situation during the seven councils of the early Church, from Nicaea I in 325 to Nicaea II in 787, when doctrinal issues predominated over those involving Church order. Moreover, the doctrinal statements of these

medieval councils largely concerned matters in dispute within the Western church: they were not, for the most part, issues of major concern to the wider Church. For the most part, too, the statements were conservative in nature; the medieval councils were hesitant to go beyond what the early councils had stated in an authoritative way. This is not at all to say that Christians in the medieval West were uninterested in theology. On the contrary, many indulged in it with passion. It is simply that they did their theology, for the most part, in forums other than general councils: through discussion and books, in monasteries and convents, in schools and universities.

Nevertheless, the fact that the medieval councils were hesitant, in doctrinal matters, to go beyond what the early councils had stated is significant. In these assemblies, which were recognised as more authoritative than the writings of individual theologians or even the collective statements of university faculties, the medieval West lived in awe of its Asian past. The hesitation surely reflects the unease of medieval people regarding the status of their own general councils, which has been dwelt upon earlier. It also reflects a more general sense of Western inferiority at this time.

Inferiority Complex of the West

It is very important to understand the sense of inferiority felt by the Western world at the time. The West today is often accused of promoting an aggressive and domineering form of Christianity. The accusation has come about largely as a result of the expansion of Christianity into a world religion and the self-confidence, frequently arrogance, that accompanied the expansion. It began in the sixteenth century, with the 'discovery of the new world' in Western eyes, and developed further with Europe's colonial expansion in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The view from the Middle Ages, however, was very different. At the time of the medieval councils Christianity had existed for over a millennium and yet seemed to be making little progress. It occupied a small corner of the globe and it was aware of this; in many ways it was a shrinking religion. That is to say, Christianity, and *a fortiori* Western Christendom, was then probably smaller in geographical extent than it had been in the last century of the Roman Empire, the time of the early councils. Gains in north and central Europe had been offset by massive losses, mostly to Islam, in the near East and North Africa. Islam, although a much younger religion than Christianity, was already far more widespread; it was already almost a world religion. It continued to advance, except in Spain, and to threaten Christendom, culminating with the capture

of Constantinople in 1453. There was also the threat from the north-east. Tartars (or Mongols) from central Asia captured Budapest, capital of Hungary, in 1242 and the fear remained that they would conquer even further west. The final defeat and extinction of Christianity seemed a real possibility. The first Council of Lyons, which was held in 1245, a mere three years after the capture of Budapest, expressed this possibility graphically in its decree relating to the Tartar incursions:

> The wicked race of Tartars, seeking to subdue, or rather utterly destroy the Christian people, having gathered for a long time past the strength of their tribes, have entered Poland, Russia, Hungary and other Christian countries . . . As time went on, they could attack stronger Christian armies and exercise their savagery more fully upon them. Thus when, God forbid, the world is bereaved of the Christian faithful, faith may turn aside from the world to lament its followers destroyed by the barbarity of this people.[19]

In addition to these physical threats, there was a sense of cultural inferiority. Four cultures or civilisations were thought to be, in various ways, superior to Western Christendom. The first of these was Judaism, a much older religion than Christianity, which possessed in many ways a richer culture and whose people were renowned for their intellectual skills as well as those in business, medicine and other walks of life. The second was Islam, which, as just mentioned, was expanding faster and more widely than Christianity. Its architects and artists were at least as skilled as Christians, as travellers to Spain and the near East could see, and its philosophers, notably Avicenna and Averröes and other commentators on Aristotle, were the envy of Western scholars. The third was Byzantium, with its great city of Constantinople, which considered itself, and to some extent was recognised by the West, as the true heir of the ancient world and the early Church much more than its upstart neighbours in the West. Finally, the ancient world of Greece and Rome, long since vanished except in Byzantium, yet surviving vigorously in people's memory and still largely unsurpassed by Western Christendom in philosophy, literature, art, government and law. In these respects, too, the Middle Ages predates the intellectual self-confidence which became associated with Christianity as it developed into a dominant world religion from the sixteenth century onwards. The underlying mood was rather of unease and defensiveness. Many of the attitudes and responses of the period, which may appear to us today as aggressive and unjustified, such as the crusades, the obsession with heresy, or

the attacks on Jews, must be seen in this context. People who are ill at ease or threatened often act in strange ways.

In short, Western Christendom in the Middle Ages felt hemmed in both by its neighbours and by its past. In many ways it had never caught up with the age that had gone before it; a strange feeling that we find difficult to appreciate. It had never really caught up with the ancient world of Greece and Rome, nor with the early Church, all of which were profoundly influenced by the Eastern and Asian world. Now it was threatened, too, both physically and culturally, by outside enemies and these also came predominantly from Asia. All this was reflected in the conservatism and relative paucity of doctrinal statements of the medieval councils. The giant of Asia continued to project its powerful presence over the medieval West.

Decrees on Church Order

So much for the doctrinal teaching of the medieval general councils. What about the decrees of a disciplinary nature, those touching Church order, which made up the large majority of the councils' business? There is no doubt that the medieval councils moved the Western church beyond – many would say, away from – its Asian roots in matters of discipline and Church order, in the practice of Christianity. They were partly responsible for major and long-lasting developments on a whole range of issues: many aspects of prayer and popular religion, religious orders, the sacraments, crusades and the inquisition, attitudes towards dissent within the Christian community and towards other religions, the papacy and Church government. It would, however, be largely anachronistic to claim that the development was con-sciously in a 'Western' direction. Indeed, Western self-consciousness is more alleged from outside, by other countries and civilisations, than recognised by the West. From the growth of nation-states in the sixteenth century onwards, until very recently, the countries of the West have thought of themselves primarily as individual countries – Spain, France, Germany, England, USA, and so on, with their own languages and traditions – rather than as belonging to the Western world. But that is another story! It would also be wrong to suggest that medieval developments in the practice of Christianity were conscious departures from the early Church; conscious departures from the Church's Asian foundations. The medieval Church, especially its general councils, always thought of itself as in continuity with the early Church, as developing in time in a legitimate manner. The profession of faith that the Council of Constance required of a future pope, mentioned above, expresses

the point well, so it may be quoted again and more fully. The pope was
to promise:

> that as long as I am in this fragile life I will firmly believe and hold
> the catholic faith, according to the traditions of the apostles, of the
> general councils and of the other holy fathers, especially of the eight
> holy ecumenical councils – namely the first at Nicaea, the second
> at Constantinople, the third at Ephesus, the fourth at Chalcedon,
> the fifth and sixth at Constantinople, the seventh and Nicaea, and
> the eighth at Constantinople – as well as of the general councils
> at the Lateran, Lyons and Vienne, and I will preserve this faith
> unchanged to the last dot and will confirm, defend and preach it
> to the point of death and the shedding of my blood, and likewise
> I will follow and observe in every way the rite handed down of the
> ecclesiastical sacraments of the catholic church.[20]

The profession reveals a conservatism in ecclesiastical discipline as well as in
doctrine.

It has already been argued that the Church today is less definitively bound
to the decrees of the medieval councils because of the lower status of these
councils in comparison with those of the early Church. In the case of disci-
plinary decrees there is the additional reason that many of them dealt with
contingent matters and therefore are, in principle, open to change. The same
point applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to other decrees of a more practical nature,
those concerning devotional life and even ecclesiology.

The contingent and therefore changeable nature of many of the medieval
councils' decrees concerning Church order has been demonstrated in recent
times by the apologies issued by the present pope regarding, among other
things, the crusades, the Church's treatment of heretics, including the
Inquisition, and Christian attitudes towards Jews. On all three issues the
medieval general councils enacted hardline decrees, expressing views that
have now been largely disowned. Regarding the crusades, the councils from
Lateran I in 1123 to Lateran V in 1512–17 issued a series of decrees that
made Christian defence or recapture of the Holy Land, or its 'liberation' as
the decrees preferred to speak, the Church's top priority.[21] The fourth Lateran
Council of 1215 spoke of the holy war as 'this business of Jesus Christ'
(*negotium Jesu Christi*) and excommunicated those who had promised to join
the expedition and then had second thoughts.[22] The same council 'condemned
all heretics, whatever names they may go under, for they have different faces

indeed but their tails are tied together inasmuch as they are alike in their pride'. It ordered kings and other secular authorities, under pain of excommunication, to expel heretics from their territories, 'to cleanse their lands of this heretical filth'.[23] This is certainly a form of ethnic, or religious, cleansing that is rightly abhorred today. The Council of Vienne in 1311–12, in its decrees on the Inquisition, approved the imprisonment and even torture of suspects.[24] Jews were the subject of a series of restrictive and coercive decrees, especially by the fourth Lateran Council, which described them as 'perfidious' and 'blasphemers of Christ'.[25] It is painful to continue. We should, moreover, acknowledge the other, brighter side of the coin: the brilliance and creativity of medieval religion in so many areas of life: liturgy and prayer, charity towards the needy and marginalised, cathedrals and parish churches, religious orders, art and music, and so much else. A frequent corollary of energy and commitment in religion is, sadly, intolerance of nonconformists and outsiders, who seem to threaten the good work. But this is not our main concern in this lecture. The relevant point is that recent rethinking about teaching of the medieval councils that seemed at the time very important and yet appears today as repugnant, indicates that it is right to review the pronouncements of these councils more widely, that the Church has a certain freedom to return to its Asian roots in matters of Church order.

Council of Trent

The Council of Trent must be treated separately from the medieval councils for the obvious reasons that however long one extends the Middle Ages, it cannot be extended into the mid-sixteenth century, several decades after the beginning of the Reformation, and because the council's influence dominated the Western Church for another three centuries into the modern era. In addition, the primary concern of Trent was doctrine and in this respect it differed from the medieval councils, which focused mainly on discipline and Church order, as mentioned. It represented a return to the predominantly doctrinal councils of the early church. The differences, however, should not be exaggerated. Trent is often seen as belonging to the new age of Renaissance and discovery – from a European perspective – of the wider world, of Reformation and Counter-Reformation, yet it should also be seen as the crown of medieval religion. The bishops and theologians of Trent were more influenced by late medieval theology than by the Reformation. In matters of Church order, too, Trent was largely in continuity with the councils of the Middle Ages.

How much Asian influence remained at Trent, or does the council represent the decisive moment when the Catholic Church became Westernised? What has been said about the lesser status of the medieval councils applies *a fortiori* to Trent. That is to say, there was no representation of the Orthodox Church nor, in any proper sense, of the Protestant churches of the Reformation. Inasmuch as the teachings of the medieval councils may be open to review, so too those of Trent, and the more Western biases may be redressed.

Trent was eager to connect with the Church's Eastern and Asian roots. Its first doctrinal decree proclaimed that 'the creed which the holy Roman church uses as the basic principle on which all who profess the faith of Christ necessarily agree' is the Nicene Creed – that produced by the predominantly Eastern and Asian councils of Nicaea I and Constantinople I – and proceeded to reproduce this creed faithfully, with the one exception of the addition of the *Filioque* clause.[26] Immediately afterwards the council tackled the issue of Scripture and tradition. Here, too, the council connected with the Church's Asian roots: Jesus Christ, the Asian Jew who is the unique source of the gospel – God's good news to us – and the fulfilment of the prophets of the Old Testament, all of whom were Asians. This is how the council expressed it:

> Our lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, first proclaimed with his own lips the gospel, which had in the past been promised by the prophets in the sacred scriptures. Then he bade it be preached to every creature through his apostles as the source of the whole truth of salvation and rule of conduct.[27]

The council went on to speak of Scripture and tradition. This 'gospel', it said, is contained

> in written books and in unwritten traditions which were received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ, or else have come down to us, handed on as it were from the apostles themselves at the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.[28]

Any suggestion that scripture and tradition are two independent sources, that a Western church can alter the Asian scriptures, is unjust to Trent. There is but one primordial source, it says, not two, the gospel proclaimed by Jesus Christ, and in the transmission of this gospel to us scripture and tradition are closely linked. The apostles, moreover, all Asians, had a unique role in

tradition. It was they who received the traditions from the mouth of Christ and who handed them on.

The role of scripture and tradition was the first great controversial issue that Trent tackled. The council asserted the importance of tradition in the face of the almost exclusive emphasis placed upon scripture by the Protestants of the time. The second major issue was the role of faith and good works in the work of our justification. Here the Eastern/Asian and Western/European lines become crossed. The controversy lay within the Western Church. The two principal authorities to which the Reformers appealed were the Asian Paul of Tarsus, especially in his letter to the Romans, and Augustine of Hippo, an African who belonged to the Latin-speaking Western church. Trent, in its decree on justification, both argued that the Reformers were misrepresenting Paul and Augustine and sought to move the debate beyond the confines of the two men into the wider traditions of the Church both East and West.[29]

Regarding the sacraments and Church order, Trent may seem to have confirmed and developed a more consciously Western direction. It confirmed the list of seven sacraments, which had become established in the thirteenth century, notably through the profession of faith made by the eastern emperor at the second Council of Lyons in 1274, and expanded on the teaching regarding them contained in the Council of Florence's decree of reunion with the Armenians.[30] Regarding the status and roles of bishops, priests and religious orders, Trent supported the developments that had taken place in the Western Church during the Middle Ages. On the other hand, it saw no hardline endorsement of the Gregorian Reform, the movement named after its most notable leader, Pope Gregory VII (1073–85), which is usually seen as the decisive moment when the ecclesiology of the Western church diverged from that of the Eastern. Thus, Trent promulgated no decree on the papacy – mainly because the pope's authority in relation to councils had been a contested issue within the Catholic community since the time of the councils of Constance and Basel in the fifteenth century and Trent wisely refrained from reopening these wounds. In addition, the council's decrees relating to bishops, priests and religious are more concerned with reform and rooting out abuses than with enforcing their authority and jurisdiction.[31] The tone of Trent's ecclesiology is closer to that of the early councils than to subsequent medieval developments.

The Council of Trent is often seen as a hammer that was used against Protestants and ensured the Westernisation of the Roman Catholic Church for many centuries. This is misleading. The council, in many respects, broadened the Church, made it more catholic, allowed it to escape from the excessive

Eurocentrism of some aspects of the Protestant Reformation. The latter was an exclusively European phenomenon and Trent incorporated many of its better insights into its own decrees, especially in the early stages of the council. At the same time it rejected the more extreme forms of individualism and self-righteousness to which the doctrine of justification by faith alone, especially, might be prone and which have often been associated, subsequently, with the Western psyche. Trent, in many respects, helped to return the Church to its truly catholic and Asian roots.

Vatican I and II

This third and final section looks at the two most recent general councils of the Catholic Church, the first and second Vatican councils. They took place at a time when, for the first time in history, Christianity had become a world religion. What was the Asian contribution to them?

Vatican I

The first Vatican Council, which took place in St Peter's Basilica in Rome during the eight months between December 1869 and July 1870, will not detain us long. It was from the beginning threatened by the outbreak of war between France and Germany and the withdrawal of the two countries' bishops that would probably result. There was also the danger posed by the Italian army, which had encircled Rome in its quest to conquer the Papal States and complete the reunification of Italy. When the Franco–Prussian War broke out in July 1870 the council was postponed, never to reassemble, and as a result its intended business remained unfinished. Earlier, with the two clouds hanging over its head, the council had agreed to focus on what were seen, at least by Pope Pius IX and the Roman Curia, the organisers of the council, as the most important issues. As a result, only two decrees were promulgated.

The first decree, entitled 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith', concerned the relationship between faith and reason. On the one hand it argued for a 'twofold order of knowledge': 'We know at one level by natural reason, at the other level by divine faith.' Though 'faith is above reason, there can never be any real disagreement between faith and reason, since it's the same God who, on the one hand, is the source of revelation and infused faith, and on the other hand has endowed the human mind with the light of reason'. Truth, therefore, is one. 'Not only can faith and reason never be at odds with another but they mutually support each other.'[1] If the 'twofold

order' of knowledge is emphasised, Western influence comes to mind: the separation of faith and reason in medieval scholasticism and more radically in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. The council may be seen as trying to grapple with this problem of separation – perhaps a false problem – in which Western analytic thought had become enmeshed. On the other hand, the oneness and unity of truth, upon which the decree also insists, may be closer to the mentality of Asia, which sees truth under different facets but rejects any dichotomies in it.

Vatican I's second decree, 'On the Church of Christ', known from its opening words as *Pastor aeternus*, is more famous. It was originally intended to be a complete treatise on the Church but the curtailment of the council's business means that in fact only the papacy was treated, culminating in a fourth and final chapter on papal infallibility. Whether the papacy, as portrayed in the decree, represents more the model of authority in the East than in the West may be debated. The decree did not try to base itself upon any secular models of authority, be they of East or West, but rather to expound the existing teaching of the Church as found in scripture and tradition. The model of authority, however, is more communal than is often alleged. The decree does not say directly that the pope is infallible. It says, rather, that in certain solemn situations the pope possesses 'the infallibility that the divine Redeemer (Christ) willed his Church to enjoy in defining doctrine concerning faith and morals'.[2] In other words, papal infallibility is placed within the context of the Church, which, as Vatican II later taught, means 'the people of God'.[3] The pope representing God's people in this way is, perhaps, closer to an Eastern model of authority than the more juridical and individual model of authority that has often predominated in the West; though the latter model is also clearly there in the decree, especially in the third chapter entitled 'On the power and character of the primacy of the Roman pontiff'.[4]

In addition to the two decrees, the council issued a 'Profession of Faith', which gave pride of place to the Nicene Creed in the revised version produced by the first Council of Constantinople in 381.[5] The council thus set itself squarely in this Asian tradition. In a sense, too, the declaration of papal infallibility, the bishop of Rome's concern for the whole Church, is an expression of the universal nature of the Church, a move away from a narrowly Western church. The declaration coincided with the rapid growth of the Church worldwide, in Asia and elsewhere, in the nineteenth century. Initially, moreover, the council intended to tackle other topics concerning Asia, notably the Eastern churches and missionary work, but these had to be sacrificed when the council was cut short.[6]

In terms of participants, Vatican I was predominantly European. It has been calculated that of the 1,056 individuals who were eligible to attend – mostly diocesan bishops but including vicars apostolic, heads of religious orders, and senior officials of the Roman Curia – 792 attended at least one session and an average of around 700 were present at any given time. About a third of the 792 came from outside Europe but the large majority of them were of European origin, either missionary bishops or the sons of European families that had settled abroad. Asia was represented by 40 or so prelates of Eastern-rite churches, mostly from the near East, and a similar number of Latin-rite bishops and vicars apostolic, including 16 from India and 15 from China, three from Indo-China, one from the Philippines (the archbishop of Manila), two from Korea and four from Indonesia and the Pacific. While a good number of the Eastern-rite bishops were Asians, almost all the Latin-rite bishops and vicars apostolic were missionaries from Europe.[7]

Though it cannot be said that the participants from Asia had a major influence upon the council, it was not negligible. Of the 417 speeches delivered at the official debates, 30 were made by representatives of Asia.[8] The nine Melkite bishops who attended, led by their patriarch Gregory Yussef (Jussef) of Antioch, formed a substantial group within the minority party of those opposed to the proclamation of papal infallibility and a number of other Eastern-rite bishops, notably among the Chaldaeans, voted with the minority.[9] Most of Asia's representatives, however, especially among those of the Latin rite, voted with the majority supporting papal infallibility: notable exceptions were half a dozen bishops from China who at least occasionally voted with the minority. Most countries in Asia still came under the authority of Propaganda congregation (*Congregatio de propaganda fidei*) in the Roman Curia and their bishops were influenced by cardinal Barnabò, who was both prefect of the congregation and a strong supporter of papal infallibility. Two Jesuits, both missionary bishops from Europe working in India, were of some importance within the majority party: the German Meurin, apostolic vicar of Bombay, and the Dutchman Stems, apostolic vicar of Calcutta.[10]

The medieval councils, Trent and Vatican I, represent the low point in the influence of Asia on the church councils compared with the ecumenical councils of the early Church. It was, nevertheless, far from negligible. To state the obvious, the later councils always saw their foundations as lying in the Asian Jesus Christ and the mainly Eastern early Church. In terms of councils, they saw themselves as being in continuity with the predominantly Asian early councils and, with a sense of respect and veneration, were reluctant to move beyond them, at least in matters of doctrine. The healthy presence of

Asia continued to loom large, even while the councils moved to Europe and the large majority of participants and immediate concerns were European. At these councils, taken together, Asia had far more impact than any other continent except Europe, much more than Africa or America.

Vatican II

The second Vatican Council witnessed a significant increase in the influence of Asia – as indeed of the rest of the non-European world – especially during the latter half of the council. The continent was represented by some 250 of the approximately 2,500 individuals (mainly bishops, both diocesans and their auxiliaries, but also vicars apostolic, heads of religious orders and senior officials of the Roman Curia) who were full members of the council at any given time. In terms of Catholic population, therefore, Asia was well represented. Some 5 per cent of the world's Catholic population then living in Asia were represented by 10 per cent of the members of the council; figures that are influenced by the fact that many of the bishops in question – though a far smaller proportion than at Vatican I – were missionaries from Europe.[11] What about the importance of the Asian contribution?

Preparation

Soon after the announcement of the forthcoming council by Pope John XXIII in January 1959, the Roman Curia wrote to all prospective members of the council, and various other individuals and institutions, to request their suggestions. Seventy per cent of the bishops and other representatives of Asia responded and duly sent in their suggestions, or *vota* as they were called. This was the lowest proportion in any of the five continents except Australasia, where the figure was 69 per cent, and compares with 83 per cent for Africa and 80 per cent for Europe. It represents, nevertheless, a decent response since many Chinese and Vietnamese bishops were effectively subjected to enforced silence by their respective governments.[12]

   The enormous variety of peoples within the vast continent of Asia showed itself in a corresponding variety of responses in the *vota*. One obviously cannot speak of a single Asian response. Nevertheless, for the most part individually, the responses are interesting and foreshadow many of the themes that were later to influence the council.

   Bishops of Eastern-rite Catholic churches were among the few who refused to follow Rome's directives that they submit their *vota* in Latin, giving them

instead in Italian or French: a foreshadowing of the eventual conversion to vernacular languages in the liturgy and other areas of Church life as a result of the council. The bishop of Krishnagar in India, Louis La Ravoire Morrow, a Salesian originally from the USA, was even more direct, saying that 'the Latin language is no longer a means of unifying the Church'. For the Eastern-rite churches the question of language concerned their autonomy; an issue that was to develop further during and after the council. Maximus IV, the Melkite patriarch of Antioch, who was to become a leading figure of the council, touched on the issue of autonomy in a letter he wrote to the pope in August 1959, in the name of all Melkite bishops. In the letter he objected to the seating arrangement whereby Oriental patriarchs were to be placed behind cardinals, since this would indicate a lack of respect for their churches and 'the importance of the Churches is signified by precedence'. Indeed, the bishops of all the Eastern-rite churches, even those with close ties with Rome, such as the Maronites, emphasised in their responses their distinctiveness, their Eastern character, their role in reunion with the Orthodox, and that they were not mere appendices of the Roman church.[13]

Other *vota* revealed varying, sometimes almost contradictory, emphases. The vicar apostolic of Purkoweto in Indonesia anticipated the council's emphasis upon inculturation and regular consultation. He wanted the forthcoming council to be organised according to cultural areas, in seven geographical sections, and advocated a plenary council every 50 years alternating with a worldwide conference every 25 years. Bishops from Hong Kong, Formosa and the Philippines, as well as others who had been expelled from China and were now living in Europe, asked for a renewal of the Church's condemnations of Communism, a proposal that was not accepted by the council. In a similar vein, the Japanese cardinal Doi of Tokyo wanted a condemnation of intellectual trends such as existentialism and relativism. The Indian cardinal Gracias of Bombay wanted a reform of the Roman Curia as well as definitions of new dogmas about Mary. The archbishop of Taipei in Formosa wanted the eradication of colonialism in evangelisation and the internationalisation of the Roman Curia as well as doctrinal definitions regarding the Mystical body, and Mary as mediatrix and coredemptrix, also condemnations of Communism, atheistic humanism and existentialism in accordance with Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Humani Generis*: some of which proposals were at least partly accepted by the council and others rejected. Victor Bazin MEP (Missions Etrangères de Paris), archbishop of Rangoon in Burma, wanted the council to decide whether Buddhism should be regarded as atheistic or rather as an incomplete religion, following theologians such

as Daniélou, de Lubac, Guardini and Karrer. He clearly favoured the latter approach, anticipating the cautious openings to non-Christian religions that were to mark the council's decree *Nostra Aetate.*[14]

The theology faculty of the Papal Athenaeum in Pune (then Poona) in India submitted its *votum* urging the Catholic Church to greater cooperation with Protestants and the Eastern churches. It wanted a group of young priests to be selected, instructed and trained for the work of reunion. It also urged, with a view to ecumenical progress, that the Christological nature of all Marian dogmas be explained. The Church should promote works of charity and social justice, also a more active participation in the liturgy by explaining the rites and words better, though it asked only for 'certain norms and decrees for the use of modern languages'.[15] Also in India, the meeting of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Delhi in November to December 1961 had an important bearing on the forthcoming Vatican Council. Rome eventually agreed to send 'observers' to the assembly, the first time it had sent delegates with this status to a meeting of WCC. By this action Rome met the conditions set by WCC for the latter to send its own observers to the Vatican Council. These observers were to play a considerable role in the council and in its favourable reception by other churches.[16]

First Session, Autumn 1962

An event that was to prove crucial to the outcome of the council was the debate on the elections to the conciliar commissions, which took place at the first working session of the council on Saturday 13 October. Ten commissions[17] would be responsible for guiding the decrees through the council, revising or drafting them anew in the light of the speeches and submissions made by the fathers. Would the members of the commissions be much the same as those of the ten conciliar commissions that had been responsible for the preparation of the council and had been organised around and largely controlled by the congregations and other *dicasteri* of the Roman Curia? The rejection of this eventuality, which began at the fateful session on 13 October, led to the opening up of the commissions to a much wider membership.[18] It was quickly followed, partly as a result, by the rejection of almost all the 70 decrees that the preparatory commissions had submitted. The council then had to start virtually from scratch in drafting new decrees, a process that was eventually to last the full four years of the council. In this situation the conciliar commissions, which were responsible for the drafting and revising, assumed an even greater importance.

What was the representation of Asia on these conciliar commissions? Initially the changes from the preparatory to the conciliar commissions were not so radical. Of the 160 members of the ten commissions – 16 for each of them – 57 per cent had been members of the preparatory commissions and 43 per cent were new.[19] To these 160, the pope appointed a further nine to each commission, a total of 90, of whom 70 per cent had belonged to the preparatory commissions and 30 per cent were new.[20] Europeans were much the largest group, though there were more representatives from the other continents than there had been on the preparatory commissions.[21] Of the elected members, Asia counted about 14 (the figure includes missionary bishops of European origin) and thus came well below America (south and north), with its far larger Catholic population, but above Africa and Australia (Oceania). Of the members nominated by the pope, Asia was similarly well represented in proportion to its Catholic population.[22] India was the country in the continent with the largest number: seven elected and one nominated members.[23] The four *periti* (theologians) from India who, in addition, were assigned to the commissions included Father Placid Podipara CMI. Professor of the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome and Consultor of the Roman Curia's Congregation for Oriental Churches, he had been a Consultor of the council's Preparatory Commission for the Oriental Churches and was then appointed to the corresponding conciliar commission, remaining on it for the duration of the council.[24] For the key posts in the commissions, namely their presidents, vice-presidents and secretaries, the Armenian Cardinal Agagianian, who was both Prefect of the curial congregation 'Propaganda Fidei' and president of the corresponding conciliar commission on Missions, was the only Asian representative. The commissions grew considerably in size and competence during the council and the influence of the theologians (*periti*) assigned to them similarly increased.[25] Asia's contribution to them seems to have kept apace of these developments.

Regarding other organs of the council's government, at the top, under the pope, was the 'Council of Presidents' comprising ten cardinals. Asia was represented by Cardinal Tappouni, patriarch of Antioch, of the Syro-Catholic rite, and by the Chinese cardinal Thomas Tien Kenshin, though illness prevented the latter from active participation and a car accident necessitated his resignation in 1963.[26] Philip Nabaa, the Melkite bishop of Beirut in Lebanon, an Arab, was one of the council's five under-secretaries, working under the Secretary-general, the Italian archbishop Pericles Felici. The Secretariat for Extraordinary Affairs, which Pope John established as a mediating body between the Presidents and the Secretary-general, comprised seven cardinals

none of whom was Asian.[27] The second session of the council in the autumn of 1963 saw a radical change in the council's government with the introduction of four Moderators. They formed an executive committee, responsible for determining the programme of the council's business and individually presiding over the debates, thus replacing for most purposes the rather cumbersome Council of Presidents. The same four individuals held the office of Moderator throughout the rest of the council: Cardinals Döpfner, Suenens and Lercaro from Europe and Cardinal Agagianian from Armenia, sometimes described as the three Synoptics and St John! The three 'Synoptics' undoubtedly formed the driving force of the team but Agagianian also played his part.

As the first session of the council unfolded, the most distinctive figure from Asia was the Melkite patriarch of Antioch, Maximos IV, then aged 84. He led the opposition to cardinals being given precedence over patriarchs in the seating in St Peter's church, where the formal debates were held, in the order of speaking in the debates, in liturgical functions and on other occasions. He thus led the way in a certain decentralisation of the Church, a recognition that the Eastern-rite Catholic churches, and by extension other churches, are churches in their own right, not just extensions of the Roman church. All seven Eastern-rite Catholic churches, most of whose representatives at the council were Asians, were in agreement regarding the distinctiveness of their churches and that they should form bridges to eventual reunion with the Orthodox and other Eastern churches. In other respects, however, they appear divided. The representatives of the Chaldean and Armenian churches, along with some Maronites and the Ukrainians, were closer allies of Rome. The Melkites, led by Maximos IV and Bishop Edelby of Edessa, and some Maronites, were the most insistent upon the autonomy of their churches. Edelby, indeed, attacked the role of 'experts living in Rome', who, he said, should keep to their place and not substitute themselves for bishops, whose view they did not represent. Maximos and Edelby, moreover, had close contacts with Western bishops who were open to ecumenism. They and the other Melkite bishops resided at Salvator Mundi together with groups of various nationalities, including a dozen North American bishops, and Edelby recorded in his journal the friendliness and exchange of views among them.[28]

Patriarch Maximos and the other Melkite bishops led the attack in the council's first session on the decree on the Oriental churches, *De unitate*, which had been drawn up by the relevant preparatory commission before the council. Their criticism focused on the decree's alleged premise that in eventual reunion with the Orthodox churches, the Eastern-rite Catholic churches – sometimes called Uniate churches – were something of an embarrassment and

might have to be sacrificed or would disappear. They argued, once again, that they were churches in their own right, sister churches of Rome not disposable daughters. This aggressive line, however, irritated the other Eastern Catholic churches and finally the Melkites were defeated and isolated in the council debate. Ultimately, indeed, partly as a result of the Melkite attack, relations with the Orthodox Church were removed from the decree, thus castrating it, and were transferred to the decree on ecumenism.[29]

In most other respects the Asian representatives in the early stages of the council appear to have acted as individuals rather than as members of national or ethnic groups. There are various reasons for this. The relative newness and minority status of Catholicism in most countries of Asia meant a certain lack of tradition and confidence. Many bishops were missionaries from Europe, often members of religious orders, and as a result had ties outside Asia. Finally, the Asian churches lacked national colleges in Rome – apart from those of some Eastern-rite Catholic churches and the newly founded Collegio Filippino – where the bishops of a country could live together in their own environment and as a result could coalesce as a group, as happened with US bishops at the North American College and European bishops in their national colleges.[30]

A number of the representatives of Asia, mostly missionaries of European origin, made important contributions to groups that were not limited to the Asian continent. The Dutch Capuchin Tarcisius van Valenberg, who had been Apostolic Vicar in Borneo for many years, was the founder and leader of the association of missionary bishops called 'Vriedenclub'. A loose structure, a study group more than anything else, without any formal organisation, it met regularly during the council and was very influential within progressive circles in the council. Van Valenberg was also a member of the 'Church of the Poor' group within the council and a friend of its leader, Father Gauthier. Jan Schütte, Superior General of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD), who became the chief architect of the council's decree on the Missions, *Ad Gentes*, was another European missionary who had worked in Asia. He had been Apostolic Pro-Prefect of Sinsiang in China until his expulsion from the country. Of a different leaning, several bishops from the Philippines were members of the conservative group 'Coetus Patrum'.[31]

Asia also made some contribution through the 'observers' sent by various churches. Those represented in this way were the Armenian church of Lebanon and the Syriac church, and various other Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox (Monophysite) churches which, though not principally Asian churches, had members in various countries of the continent, mainly in the near East. Most Protestant churches that sent 'observers' also had congregations in Asia.

Prominent among the observers was Karekin Sarkissian of the Armenian church of Lebanon. When the 'observers' were received in audience by Pope John XXIII on 13 October, Sarkissian was chosen to reply to the pope on their behalf, though in the end he was not permitted to do so for reasons of protocol. Paul Verghese from India, Assistant General Secretary of WCC, represented the Syrian Jacobite Church.[32]

The Progressive Majority

The most important development at Vatican II was the emergence of the progressive majority, which rejected the decrees that had been prepared by the curia-dominated commissions before the council and supported the more open and progressive ones that eventually emerged. The most prominent members of this majority, especially in the first two years of the council, were predominantly Europeans. Patriarch Maximos IV of Antioch was one of the relatively few exceptions from other continents. Nevertheless the 250 or so bishops and others representing Asia, along with those representing the other continents outside Europe, were crucial for the development of the progressive party into the majority party. There was both a similarity and a difference with Vatican I. At both councils the representatives of Asia aligned largely with the majority, but whereas at Vatican I it was with what might be called the Rome-dominated majority, at Vatican II it was with the majority led by northern Europe.

Third Session, Autumn 1964

The contribution of Asia within the progressive majority is well illustrated by the debates of the third session of the council in the autumn of 1964. We may look at this role through the debates on five decrees, which I have recently had the privilege of studying,[33] namely: *Gaudium et Spes* or 'The Church in the Modern World', Missions, The Life and Ministry of Priests, Priestly Formation, Marriage.

The Church in the Modern World

The debate on *Gaudium et Spes*, 'The Church in the Modern World', dominated the third session of the council. The debate on the other and more theological decree on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, took place for the most part earlier, in the first and second sessions. While *Lumen Gentium* is usually regarded as the

centrepiece of the council, *Gaudium et Spes* may be seen as its crown. Of all the council's 16 decrees it accorded most closely with Pope John's vision of a pastoral council. It was the first decree ever of an ecumenical council to be addressed directly not only to all Christians but also to the wider world: 'The second Vatican council now addresses itself not just to the Church's own sons and daughters and all who call on the name of Christ but to people everywhere.'[34] An unusually large number of bishops, from most parts of the world, spoke in the debate. The topics, moreover seems to have stimulated interest to an exceptional degree. This is not surprising since the large majority of the members of the council were diocesan bishops or ordinaries who would be especially interested in the work and mission of the Church in the world. The debate, too, coming in the middle of the third session of the council, was at a time of maturity for the council. The sense is of many individuals speaking with confidence and quite freely about issues that concerned them deeply, indeed passionately. The discussions are a microcosm both of the council and of the Church of the time.[35]

The views expressed by the bishops and other speakers from Asia represented a fair spectrum of the debate as a whole. In the first stage of the debate, from 20 to 23 October, when the decree as a whole was discussed, four of the 44 speakers were from Asia. Yu Pin, the exiled archbishop of Nanking in China, regretted the absence of any explicit condemnation of Communism in the document. Speaking in the name of more than 70 bishops and others mostly from China and other parts of Asia, he urged the addition of a whole chapter on atheistic Communism, which he described as the culmination of all heresies, so that, among other considerations, it might satisfy all those people who 'groan under the yoke of Communism and unjustly endure unspeakable sufferings'. The recommendation was not accepted by the council. Paul Meouchi, the Maronite patriarch of Antioch, thought the decree subordinated the Church's supernatural ends too much to earthly goals:

> The mission of the Church is described exclusively in terms of solving the temporal problems of this world, as if the Church existed only to do works of charity or to resolve social and economic problems among people. The divine purpose, in establishing the Church, is not adequately propounded.

He also thought the approach was too individualistic: 'The sense of the ecclesial community or the people of God in evolution is not asserted sufficiently: the schema labours under individualism.' Alphonse Mathias, bishop of the

newly created diocese of Chikmagalur in Karnataka, south India, wanted more emphasis upon divine providence, especially if the decree was to have an appeal in missionary lands, where providence was accepted by almost everyone even if it should not be seen as a remedy for all evils. He also wanted more reference to papal encyclicals especially regarding their exposition of natural law. Darmojuwono, archbishop of the newly created diocese of Semarang in Indonesia, later Cardinal, criticised the decree's lack of clarity regarding the two key words of 'church' and 'world'. He also urged a better biblical basis for the decree and, regarding the way forward, he emphasised the role of the laity in an almost revolutionary way, saying that it was they who should have the main role in discerning and resolving the outstanding questions.[36]

During the next stage of the debate, when the chapters and sections of the decree were discussed individually, representatives from Asia again made a significant contribution, for the most part in what might be called the 'progressive' direction. Stanislaus Lokuang, bishop of Tainan in Taiwan (Formosa), urged the importance of thoughtful inculturation. Speaking of the cultural activity of the Church in the missions, he emphasised that every people has its own culture and the Church must respect all of them. This cultural activity, he said, is required 'for the preparation or pre-evangelization of the gentiles to hear the preaching of the gospel' and he stressed the importance of the intellectual apostolate, especially Catholic universities and publications.[37]

Four bishops with sees in India spoke. Louis La Ravoire Morrow, the Salesian bishop of Krishnagar in West Bengal, originally from Texas in USA, proposed that the dialogue with the world, on which the decree spoke at length, would be possible only if we promote within Christianity 'a spirit of love rather than fear of punishments' and he urged a softening of the Church's approach to mortal sin. Dominic Athaide, the Capuchin bishop of Agra, wanted the Church to speak out more strongly against the evils of discrimination by race and colour. He was also one of the very few to praise the work of non-Christians. Thus he praised his fellow-countrymen Mahatma Gandhi and Vinobba Bhave as crusaders for social justice and better conditions of life, alongside John Kennedy and Martin Luther King and 'countless other Christians'. Duraisamy Lourdusamy, auxiliary bishop of Bangalore, later archbishop of Bangalore and cardinal, speaking, he said, in the name of almost all the Indian bishops present, more than 60 of them, spoke of aid between nations. Material aid to people in need, he said, is not enough. More important is:

> emotional integration, a sense of unity and equality among all
> people, whether rich or poor, prosperous or in need, healthy or sick,

highest or lowest in society; that is to say, psychological help is required more than physical and material, help that comes from the heart and goes to the heart.

Gregorios Varghese Thangalathil, better known as Benedict Mar Gregorios, the Syro-Malankara bishop of Trivandrum in Kerala, the fourth representative of India to speak, also dwelt on material conditions but was more concrete in his application. The divide between rich and poor nations, he said, is a moral issue inasmuch as the use of material things is necessary for the practice of virtues, as Thomas Aquinas stated. Without this use, moreover, an honest life becomes extremely difficult and people live in a proximate occasion of sin and spiritual harm. The tragedy, he said, is that the divide between nations exists and yet is unnecessary since the world today possesses the means for all to live decently.[38]

For Indonesia, Rudolph Staverman, vicar apostolic of Sukarnapura (now called Djajapura), who was a Franciscan missionary from the Netherlands, took quite a radical line on marriage, which was a hot topic in the debate on account of the possible revision of the Church's teaching on birth control. Speaking in the name of nine Indonesian and other bishops, he argued that marriage evolves like every historical reality and therefore the Church cannot be content with repeating earlier formulae, for if it does the teaching 'loses its pastoral effectiveness'. He wanted the commission responsible for revising the decree to take on more 'lay experts' as collaborators and not just as consultors since these lay people 'represent married people better than bishops and priests can' and they have a better knowledge of 'both the evolution of our understanding of marriage, conjugal love, fruitfulness, etc., and of the evolution of marriage as an historical reality'. Bishop Nguyen-Khac-Ngu, bishop of Long-Xuyen in Vietnam, wanted the decree, in its treatment of human solidarity, to give more attention to Asia, especially the Far East, to pay more respect to its 'personality' and spiritual values.[39]

Bishops from Asia belonging to the Oriental Catholic churches also made a significant contribution to the debate. Ignatius Ziadé, Maronite bishop of Beirut in Lebanon, wanted a more biblical and theological exposition of the 'signs of the times' in the decree. After all, he said, the phrase 'signs of the times' comes from the gospels and the signs are not just 'created things that manifest the Creator, they are signs of the coming of the Lord'. He urged, too, that the main themes of the council should converge more clearly in the decree, especially the liturgy as 'the leaven of the transfiguration of history', the Church as the 'communion of the holy Trinity communicated

to all people', and the eschatological sense of tradition as the 'prophecy of the economy of the Spirit'. George Hakim, Melkite bishop of Akka in Israel, criticised the decree for its lack of clarity and air of 'paternal exhortation'.[40]

Maximus IV, Melkite patriarch of Antioch in Syria, was again the most outspoken. He argued that the dialogue with the world, which the decree recommended, would be possible only if we look first to ourselves: only if, that is, we ourselves are formed and treated according to the fundamental moral principle of Christ, that he calls us friends not servants. So the 'legalist spirit', which has reigned since the sixteenth century and 'blocks the energy of both priests and laity', should be consigned to the past and in its place should reign the 'law of grace and love'. On the delicate issue of birth control he stated outright that it was causing 'a grave crisis in the Christian conscience', a 'division between the official teaching of the Church and the contrary practice of the large majority of Christian families'. The increase in population in some regions condemned hundreds of millions of people to an unworthy and hopeless misery. Is this 'depressing and unnatural impasse' really the will of God?, he asked. 'Frankly', he said, 'should not the official positions of the Church in this matter be revised in the light of our knowledge today, theological, medical, psychological and sociological?' On nuclear weapons he was equally forthright.

Nuclear weapons, he said, threaten to destroy humanity and if the 2,000 bishops at the council from all parts of the world called for peace, they might 'change the course of history and, save humanity'. Nuclear weapons will lead to a cataclysm for the world on a new scale, so that the former concept of a just war is no longer applicable. The decree, he acknowledged, speaks out against them but an even stronger and clearer 'condemnation of all nuclear, chemical and bacteriological warfare' was needed.[41]

Missions

In the debate on the decree on Missions, which occupied the council from 6 to 9 November, the Taiwanese bishop Lokuang, mentioned above, played an especially important role. He had become vice-president of the conciliar commission on Missions, which had been responsible for drafting the decree up to this point, and in this capacity he and Cardinal Agagianian, president of the commission, were responsible for introducing the decree to the assembly on the opening day of the debate. Agagianian was also Prefect of the Roman Curia's Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith as well as one of the four Moderators of the council. He put his weight behind the decree, which had, earlier in the day, in an unprecedented move, been praised by the pope

himself. Paul VI had come in person to the assembly, the only working session of the council (as distinct from solemn sessions to open or prorogue or conclude the council) that either he or John XXIII attended, and delivered a short speech of support for the decree. He then departed before the speeches of Agagianian and Lokuang. The latter, therefore, had the difficult task of facing, on the one hand, the expressed support of the pope and Agagianian for the decree and, on the other, the known opposition of most of the council to it. Opposition arose primarily because in the preceding summer the decree, along with several others that were regarded as of secondary importance, had been reduced to the status of a 'Set of Propositions'; a brief decree that simply listed a number of points without any rounded development of them. This was the result of the so-called 'Döpfner Plan', the initiative of Cardinal Döpfner of Munich, one of the council's four Moderators, which enjoyed the support of Paul VI and whose aim was to enable the council to conclude at the end of that year 1964. The plan met with widespread resistance from the members of the council on the grounds that important topics were not being treated with sufficient seriousness and the decree on Missions was one of those about which this was particularly felt.[42]

Bishop Lokuang skilfully managed to show his sympathy with this opposition without openly rebuffing either Cardinal Agagianian or Paul VI, both in his opening address and in the speech with which he wound up the debate. As a result the decree went forward to further and successful revision before the council met for the last time in 1965. Lokuang was elected to the editorial team responsible for the revision and Jan Schütte, formerly Apostolic Pro-Prefect of Sinsiang in China and at the time Superior-General of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD), was elected its president. Schütte, indeed, became the key figure in the revision, providing also pleasant surroundings for meetings of the group at the Divine Word college beside Lake Nemi near Rome.[43]

In the short debate on the decree, 28 speeches were made in addition to the opening and closing addresses of Agagianian and Lokuang. Seven of the 28 speakers represented Asian sees: Bishop Lokuang, who spoke in the middle of the debate in a private capacity; Bishop Picachy of Jamshedpur, later cardinal archbishop of Calcutta in India; Cardinal Doi of Tokyo, Japan; and four European missionary bishops, Pietro Massa and John Baptist Velasco of the dioceses of Nanyang and Hsiamen in China, both of whom had been expelled from the country; Nicholas Geise, bishop of Bogor in Indonesia, and Peter Carretto, vicar-apostolic of Rajaburi in Thailand. Most of them supported the majority of the council in their disappointment with the short decree. Geise was the most severe, quoting Virgil, 'The mountains give birth and there

comes forth a ridiculous mouse!' In other respects there was both agreement and differences of emphasis. Massa and Picachy wanted the decree to say more about the role of catechists. Carretto, speaking in the name of the bishops of Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, regretted the failure to mention the 'twinning' of parishes and dioceses, which provided mission lands with much material, psychological and personal help from traditionally Catholic countries. He praised, too, the work of various European and North American foundations that provided help – spiritual, material and in personnel – for the missions. Picachy, however, reminded the fathers that missions give as well as receive: they are 'a privilege not a burden for the Church; they contribute much to its vitality, fervour and catholicity'. Velasco thought the decree should say something about nationalism, which has 'an intimate connection with the work of evangelisation', and the rights of migrants to be treated as full citizens. Cardinal Doi emphasised the importance of knowing and embracing the local culture. Massa and Lokuang, on the other hand, warned against ill-conceived adaptation. Massa wanted the decree to state more clearly that there can be no compromise on the 'essential elements of the Christian religion', otherwise a diluted version of Christianity arises. On the contrary, there should rather be adaptation in all things to the Gospel. Lokuang, in a similar vein, said that while converts to Christianity are not obliged to renounce their own culture as such, nevertheless they are bound to renounce 'everything in the culture that is erroneous and inauthentic and irreconcilable with the new life in Christ'.[44]

Priests

In the short debates on the two decrees 'The Life and Ministry of Priests' and 'Priestly Formation', which took place on various days in October and November, Asian sees were represented by two of the 41 speakers in the first debate – Joseph Evangelisti of Meerut in India and Francis Ayoub, the Maronite bishop of Aleppo in Syria – and two out of 32 in the second: Joseph Gopu of Hyderabad in India and Paul Sani of Denpasar in Bali, Indonesia. All of them were indigenous Asians except the bishop of Meerut who was Italian by birth. Their comments are notable for their foresight of developments in the Church after the council.

Speaking about the work of priests, Evangelisti wanted the missionary nature of the priesthood to be stressed and he was one of the few speakers to mention priests' responsibilities outside the Catholic fold. Priests, he said, are co-workers with their bishop in caring for the good of the whole world, not just for that of the diocese, since 'the whole human world was created to

form the new people of God'. Gopu wanted more inculturation for seminaries. These, he said, 'in the missions should not try to imitate European seminaries exactly or slavishly' and he recommended pastoral work for the seminarians during the vacations, 'catechising boys and catechumens, teaching liturgical singing, instructing altar servers, and so on'. Sani spoke in a similar vein. He suggested that seminarians live at home and help their parish priests during the vacations and that there should be a year's pastoral or practical work after the seminary and ordination to the priesthood. He also recommended that seminarians do all their studies before ordination in their own country and go abroad for further studies only afterwards.[45]

Marriage

By the third session of the council the decree on marriage had the status of a *votum*, a guide giving principles for the forthcoming revision of canon law, and was no longer intended to be a full conciliar decree. Marriage had already been treated in *Gaudium et Spes*. In the short debate on the document towards the end of the session, Asia was represented by two of the 14 speakers: Paul Taguchi, archbishop of Osaka in Japan, and Adrian Djajasepoetra, archbishop of Djakarta in Indonesia.

Taguchi, who was a member of the conciliar commission responsible for the *Votum*, and who spoke in the debate in the name of 'many bishops of Japan and other countries', was positively encouraging of mixed marriages at least in missions lands. They often lead to conversions to the Catholic faith, he said, and the liturgy of the solemn nuptial Mass is attractive to non-Christians and moves them towards the Catholic religion, thereby greatly helping the propagation of the faith. He also urged more efficiency in dealing with marriage cases in church courts. Djajasepoetra, speaking in the name of 29 bishops from Indonesia and elsewhere in Asia, was trenchant regarding the need to adapt teaching about marriage to the local situation. He thought the definition of marriage at the beginning of the *votum*, as 'a holy contract of love, instituted by God for the worthy propagation of the human race and the protection of the sacred law of life', was too Western and inapplicable to places such as Indonesia, Africa, Pakistan, India and China – inapplicable, therefore to most of the world! He quoted the words of a Pakistani woman to Westerners: 'You contract marriage because you love, we love because we are joined in marriage.' As a better definition for marriage he suggested 'a sacred and human community of life between man and woman, instituted by God for the establishment of a family'. It is unrealistic and unfair to give primacy

to love, he argued, since outside the West marriage is often settled by the couple's parents: mutual love grows gradually as the fruit of marriage.[46]

Conclusion

These five debates in the third year of the council – on *Gaudium et Spes*, Missions, The Life and Ministry of Priests, Priestly Formation, and Marriage – form but a small part of the monumental event of Vatican II. In addition to the speeches actually made in the debates, many individuals wanted to speak and submitted texts of their intended addresses but shortage of time and the resulting closure of debates prevented their delivery. A much larger number of individuals or groups submitted written comments, which, like all the speeches, whether delivered or not, should have been taken into consideration by the conciliar commissions responsible for revising the decrees. All of these contributions can be found in the, printed *Acta* of the council, largely thanks to the prodigious editorial work of Monsignor Carbone.[47] There was, too, the council that went on outside the *aula*, the formal debating chamber set up in the nave of St Peter's church: in the bars set up in the side-chapels of St Peter's, where many participants met after or even during the debates in the *aula*, in the meetings of national episcopal conferences, in informal discussions among friends, through the mass media, and so on. What has been suggested above, therefore, is very much only the tip of an iceberg, or rather one peak in a mountain range. What, too, was the influence of the speeches that we have looked at briefly? How far did the members of the council, especially the members of the conciliar commissions, pay attention to them?[48]

The speeches are more of a window into the council than a precise measure of influence. Then there is the question of the reception of Vatican II after the council had ended. Reception is an integral part any council, especially an ecumenical council. What has been the role of Asia in the reception of Vatican II? These are large and important questions to which answers have not been attempted here but which will surely continue to be the subject of research for years to come.[49]

Despite these obvious limitations, it may be hoped that this chapter has shown, from a few pieces of the great patchwork quilt of Vatican II, that Asia made an important and distinctive contribution, that the council saw a major righting in the balance of the Church, in the direction of what was to be found in microcosm in the councils of the early Church: a righting and balancing that has continued in the years since the council and looks set to continue into the new millennium.

Conclusion and the Future

In the councils of the early Church, Asia made the largest contribution of all the continents in terms of participants and of theological input. The influence of the Eastern church was predominant. The centre of the Church is more accurately seen as located in Asia Minor rather than – following common Eurocentric approaches to geography and history – around the Mediterranean Sea. The Eastern face of Greek thought also pushes the centre into Asia. Just how far East is illustrated by the spread of Christianity into India and the far East, most notably the expansion of the Syriac (Nestorian) church into China, and by Manichaeism, which must be seen within the context of Christianity and which, originating in Mesopotamia, spread both East and West, so linking western Asia, where the Church was most established, with Eastern. Finally, the decrees issued by these early councils reveal not only the theological content of the Eastern and Asian church but also an Eastern mentality, perhaps best seen in a mainly cyclical view of life, in spaciousness and flexibility of language, and in the quest for accommodation and unanimity.

Following the sad schism between the churches of East and West beginning in the eleventh century, and the Islamic conquests of much of the Byzantine world, the centre of Christianity moved to Western Europe. The major councils, best described as general councils of the Western church, were held in Rome, France, Germany and Switzerland. Almost all the participants were Europeans. Nevertheless the Western Church clung to its Asian roots, hesitant to outgrow them. It accorded greater status to the councils of the early Church than to its own. It sensed its own insecurity and remained in awe of its Eastern and Asian past. In the sixteenth century, the Council of Trent began by affirming the Nicene Creed, thus placing itself in the mainstream of the early Church, and, while benefiting from many insights of the Reformation, in various ways also preserved the catholicity of the Church against an excessively Eurocentric theology and spirituality.

By the time of the first and second Vatican councils, Christianity had developed into the largest and most widespread world religion. The influence of Asia began to be felt again more directly. It provided a significant number

of bishops at the first council and they made a modest contribution to the proceedings. At the second Vatican Council the number of participants from Asia – especially indigenous Asians as distinct from European missionaries – grew significantly, as did their contributions, especially as the council progressed. The council contributed to rebalancing the Church away from Europe, towards Asia and the other continents.

What of the future? Maybe the next council will take place in Manila or Delhi, returning the Church to the Asian location of its first ecumenical council in Nicaea. The churches of Asia have already played a prominent role in the reception of Vatican II and this will surely grow, much to the benefit of the wider church. The second Vatican Council, as well as the caution of the councils held after the beginning of the East–West schism, especially those of the Middle Ages, encourage a certain liberation from what is sometimes called Western colonial theology and spirituality. Nevertheless, in view of Asia's unique and profoundly beneficial contribution to Christianity through the early councils, this liberation will be healthier for all if it includes prominently a recovery of Asian roots as well as any necessary rejection of what is one-sidedly Western.

The Church certainly cannot be called too Asian – to answer the question provocatively posed in the booklet's title. On the other hand, the councils show that Asia has been well represented in this key dimension of the Church's history.

S<small>MALL</small> C<small>APS</small> B<small>OOKLET</small> 2

Was the Church too Democratic?
Councils, Collegiality and the
Church's Future

Contents

Foreword

Communion is the core or essence of Christianity. The inner reality and mystery of the Church is the divine communion or participation in the life of the Triune God in and through Jesus Christ. This vertical communion of humans is realised sacramentally in a historical human community in the local church on the one hand, and on the other the divine communion is the ultimate basis for the horizontal human communion. In other words, the vertical or divine communion leads to the horizontal human communion and *vice-versa*.

However, we see in the early Church that this communion was never limited to the local church. Communion in the local church naturally led to the communion among the different local churches. Mutual visits of bishops and leaders of the local churches, praying for one another, exchange of letters and communications, material help to other churches, mutual corrections and interventions in case of heresies and schisms were the regular features of communion among the different local churches. It was the general custom right from the post-Apostolic period that the neighbouring bishops assembled together for the ordination of new bishops, for settling theological disputes and for arriving at common decisions. When Christianity became the official state religion, the political and administrative systems and divisions of the Roman Empire provided effective structures for the coming together of the churches. Provincial Synods of the early churches, held at Antioch, Alexandria, Carthage and Rome to settle the date of Easter, to solve the question of rebaptism in North Africa, to condemn the Gnostic and Montanist heresies, etc., are well known. The Nicene Council (325) decreed that the bishops of the Province should meet regularly and the Bishop of the Provincial capital should convene and preside over it.

The synodal and conciliar activities in the churches reached their climax in the fourth and fifth centuries with the Imperial Councils, convened by the Roman emperors, who wanted stability of the empire on the basis of uniformity of religious beliefs and practices as the consolidating factor. The unity of the Church in this period was inconceivable without the emperor and the imperial political system. It was Emperor Constantine himself who convened the Council of Nicea (325). Other Councils were later convened by his successors, including Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451), by which the Trinitarian and Christological doctrines of the Church and the common creeds of the Church were formulated and established by condemning the various heresies of the time. With the establishment of the power and primacy of the popes, it became the right of the popes to convene the Universal Councils and to approve their decisions. Thus the medieval

period saw many General Councils of the Catholic Church, and its climax was the Council of Trent (1543–63). Vatican I (1869–70) and Vatican II (1962–65) are well-known General Councils of the Catholic Church of the modern and contemporary period. Synods and councils thus became essential to the very administrative structure of the Church.

In this small but beautiful book Prof. Norman Tanner, the Oxford scholar, presents the fantastic and complex story of these Ecumenical, Regional and General Councils of the Catholic Church. The author is an authority on the history and theology of the ecumenical councils, and he has published several books and articles on this subject. This book contains his *Bishop Jonas Thaliath Lectures*, delivered at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore, from 28 to 29 August 2003. He highlights the Synodal and Conciliar structures and activities of the Church of the last two millennia, and looks towards the future in today's ecumenical and interreligious context.

Bishop Jonas Thaliath CMI, the late Bishop of Rajkot, Gujarat, is the founder of Dharmaram College and its allied educational institutions in Bangalore, and he was a pioneer in many things. Today, Dharmaram College has grown into Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, a Pontifical Athenaeum, which confers various degrees in Theology, Philosophy and Canon Law.

Jonas Thaliath Lectures are instituted at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, to perpetuate the happy memory of Bishop Jonas. By these annual lectures we hope to facilitate the creative encounter between Christian faith and the Indian genius, which was one of the major concerns of Bishop Jonas.

I congratulate the Dean of the Faculty of Theology, Prof. Sebastian Athappilly CMI, for inviting Prof. Norman Tanner to deliver these lectures and for organising the programme. I would like to place on record also the services of Dr Augustine Thottakara, the Director of Dharmaram Publications and his team for having undertaken the publication of this book. I wish every success to the author and this book, and hope that the readers of this book will have a tremendous opportunity in discovering the democratic and participatory process and procedures in the early churches that often remain hidden and unknown to many.

Prof. Dr Kuncheria Pathil CMI
President, Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram
Bangalore, India
13 November 2003

Preface

The text of this short book is a revised version of the Bishop Jonas Thaliath Lectures given at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore in August 2003. I thank Professor Kuncheria Pathil CMI, President, and Professor Sebastian Athappilly CMI, Dean of Theology, for the honour of inviting me to give the lectures. I thank the large audience who attended the lectures, those who made contributions during the discussion time that followed each lecture, and for all who gave me a warm welcome during my pleasant week at Dharmaram.

I am grateful to Professor Augustine Thottakara CMI, Director of Dharmaram Publications, for accepting the work for publication; to him and his staff for the production of the book.

Bishop Jonas Thaliath, founder of Dharmaram College and bishop of Rajkot, in whose memory and honour the lectures were given, was also a scholar of councils. His study of the Synod of Diamper in 1599 (*The Synod of Diamper*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta, vol. 152, Rome, 1958) remains a seminal work for Indian church history. In choosing the topic of the lectures, I was glad to find our common interest in councils.

The general theme is representation and participation in the Church. Christianity should always challenge a culture as well as be challenged by it. Yet the Catholic Church today may be in danger of excessive counter-cultural-ism in terms of both church order and theology. These issues, and others, are examined through the lens of the 21 ecumenical and general councils from Nicaea I in 325 to Vatican II in 1962–65 and of some regional councils.

The first two chapters look at councils and collegiality in the ecumenical and regional councils of the early Church: the third and fourth take the story through the Middle Ages, Trent and the two Vatican councils. The last two chapters broaden into reflections on ecumenism, inter-religious dialogue and the future.

Norman Tanner SJ
Gregorian University
Piazza della Pilotta-4
00187 Rome, Italy
October 2003

Abbreviations

AHC	*Archivum Historiae Conciliorum*
Alberigo, *Vatican II*	G. Alberigo (ed.), *History of Vatican II*, 3 of 5 vols so far (Maryknoll and Leuven, 1995–). Page references to vols 4 and 5 are to the Italian version, *Storia del concilio Vaticano II*, 5 vols (Bologna and Leuven, 1995–2001), abbreviated to: Alberigo, *Vaticano II.*
Decrees	*Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. N. Tanner (London and Georgetown, 1990), 2 vols. Continuous pagination, so the volume is not mentioned.
Migne, *PG*	J.P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Graeca*, 162 vols (Paris, 1857–66).
Tanner, *Asian Church*	N. Tanner, *Is the Church Too Asian? Reflections on the Ecumenical Councils* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002).
Tanner, *Councils*	N. Tanner, *The Councils of the Church: A Short History* (New York: Crossroad, 2001).

List of Ecumenical and General Councils[1]

Early Church

Nicaea I (325)
Constantinople I (381)
Ephesus (431)
Chalcedon (451)
Constantinople II (553)
Constantinople III (680–81)
Nicaea II (787)
Constantinople IV (869–70)

Middle Ages

Lateran I (1123)
Lateran II (1139)
Lateran III (1179)
Lateran IV (1215)
Lyons I (1245)
Lyons II (1274)
Vienne (1311–12)
Constance (1414–18)
Basel-Florence (1431–45)
Lateran V (1512–17)

Modern Era

Trent (1545–63)
Vatican I (1869–70)
Vatican II (1962–65)

Councils and Collegiality in the Early Church: Ecumenical Councils

I want to develop the two interlinked themes that councils were central to the organisation of the Church during the first millennium and that this heritage offers many hopes for the future. The first section of this booklet will concentrate on the ecumenical councils of the period, the seven councils from Nicaea I in 325 to Nicaea II in 787 which formed the apex of the conciliar pyramid.[1] The second essay focuses on regional councils – councils at a more grass-roots level if you will.

Central Role

First, then, the ecumenical councils. Their central role in the Church of the first millennium was brilliantly stated, mid-way through the period, by the fifth of them, Constantinople II in 553. In the introductory section of its main decree, it reflected on the four earlier ecumenical councils and then meditated on the importance of councils more generally. This is what it said:

> The holy fathers, who have gathered at intervals in the four holy councils [i.e., Nicaea I, Constantinople I, Ephesus and Chalcedon], have followed the examples of antiquity. They dealt with heresies and current problems by debate in common, since it was established as certain that when the disputed question is set out by each side in communal discussions, the light of truth drives out the shadows of lying.
>
> The truth cannot be made clear in any other way when there are debates about questions of faith, since everyone requires the

> assistance of his neighbour. As Solomon says in his proverbs: 'A brother who helps a brother shall be exalted like a strong city; he shall be as strong as a well established kingdom' [Proverbs 18, 19]. Again in Ecclesiastes he says: 'Two are better than one, for they have a good reward for their toil' [Ecclesiastes 4, 9]. And the Lord himself says: 'Amen I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them' [Matthew 18, 19].[2]

I do not think there could be a clearer and more explicit statement, at the high level of authority that an ecumenical council carries, of the importance of discussion and consent within the Church. It was not, moreover, empty rhetoric or wishful thinking. The passage reveals a sense of pride in the achievements of the first four councils that was largely justified.

Achievements

Regarding these achievements, the councils of Nicaea I in 325 and Constantinople I in 381 went a long way to resolving the Arian controversy and in the process produced a creed – normally called simply the Nicene Creed – that has remained unaltered, with the single exception of the unfortunate addition by the Western church of the *Filioque* clause ('and from the Son', asserting that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son of God as well as from the Father), right down to today as the most widely accepted creed among all Christian churches. It was a remarkable achievement indeed.

The controversial Council of Ephesus in 431 defended Mary's title of Mother of God or God-bearer (Θεοτόκος 'Theotokos') against the criticism of Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, thereby laying this foundation for Christians' devotion to Mary and, of still greater importance, emphasised Christ's divinity: that the child Mary bore was truly divine, truly Son of God incarnate, and in this sense Mary can be called Mother of God. The next council, Chalcedon in 451, redressed the balance by asserting Christ's humanity. That is to say, alongside his divine nature, Christ possessed a human nature, was like us in all things but sin, was indeed 'consubstantial' with us in his humanity – the same word consubstantial (ὁμοούσιος, 'homoousios') that had been used in the Nicene Creed to express the Son of God's relationship with his Father was now used to express Christ's identity and solidarity with us in his humanity.

The next two councils, Constantinople II and Constantinople III, continued the work of Chalcedon, exploring further the relationship between Christ's humanity and divinity. Finally, Nicaea II in 787 defended the Church's artistic heritage against the iconoclasts; applying, as it were, the Christological insights of previous councils to the realms of religious art and devotional life.

In addition, there were the disciplinary canons that most of the councils promulgated; canons that dealt with various aspects of Church order, most notably the 20 canons issued by the first Council of Nicaea, which constitute the Church's first code of canon law and formed a kind of template for subsequent developments in Church order.

This is not the place to enter further into the discussions of these first seven councils. What concerns us is that they took place, that they discussed seriously the issues at stake, and produced statements that eventually achieved widespread acceptance and, for the most part, have endured to this day.

There was, of course, the other side of the coin. There was heated debate at all the councils in question that we know about: fierce differences of opinion. The consensus that emerged did not come about easily. Moreover, some serious and damaging divisions remained and these were partly caused by the behaviour and decisions of the councils. Thus, Arian sympathies remained in the East for a century or so after the Council of Nicaea and much longer in the West, even into the eighth and ninth centuries. Support for Nestorius endured long after the conclusion of the Council of Ephesus and the resulting church – sometimes though much too simplistically called the Nestorian church – spread eastwards as far as China. Most serious of all, those who were uneasy about the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon, who were quickly styled 'Monophysites' by the 'Orthodox', gradually developed into three schismatic churches: the Coptic church centred on Egypt; the Jacobite church, taking its name from its founding father, Jacob Barradeus, and centred on west Syria; and thirdly the Armenian church. In addition, there were numerous smaller schisms.

Nevertheless, the fundamental unity of the Church was preserved amidst all these tensions and schisms. Far greater disunity would have occurred, it seems certain, without the councils than because of them. Later history showed that the most serious schisms – that which divided East and West beginning in 1054 and the schisms resulting from the Protestant reformations in the sixteenth century – occurred in the absence of councils, not because of them. Despite all the politicking and evidence of human nature

that may be found in the early councils, they represent a miracle of human endeavour and above all a miracle of divine grace.

Suspicion of Councils

The remarkable nature of the councils needs emphasis, especially since the whole conciliar tradition has unfortunately fallen under suspicion.

In the Roman Catholic Church suspicion has arisen principally because councils have been seen as rivals to papal authority. The tension emerged largely after the period under consideration here; first during the time of the so-called Gregorian Reform, the reform movement in the late eleventh century that took its name from its dynamic leader, Pope Gregory VII (1073–85). The movement, in its urgent drive for reform, exalted the papacy over all other sources of authority in the Church – including councils – on the grounds that it alone had the strength and determination to carry out the measures that were necessary. The conflict became more pronounced during the councils of Constance and Basel in the fifteenth century, when a full-scale struggle for supremacy developed between them and the popes of the time. Since then, at least until the second Vatican Council, conciliarism has remained under something of a cloud in the Catholic Church.

This suspicion is unnecessary and a great pity. Councils and papacy should not be seen as in competition, but rather as strengthening and confirming each other. The core members of the councils have always been the bishops of the Church and in this way councils lie at the heart of the institutional and visible Church and should not be seen as a threat to it.

Even among other Christian churches, interest has been muted. While almost all of them accept in principle a more conciliar form of government than has long been the case in the Roman Catholic Church, nevertheless their acceptance of ecumenical councils does not extend beyond Nicaea II in 787, at the latest. The Protestant churches of the Reformation, moreover, put the emphasis much more, in some cases almost exclusively, upon the authority of Scripture rather than on tradition, of which the councils form a part. Among these churches, as a result, there is not much interest in a continuing conciliar tradition throughout the history of Christianity.

Their Remarkable Nature

The remarkable nature of the ecumenical councils of the Church's first millennium may be considered under three headings.

First, within the tradition of the Church during this time. We have already noted the Church's sense of pride in its conciliar tradition as expressed by the second Council of Constantinople in 553. There was no other institution, including the papacy, that carried comparable authority. A classic indication of this occurred at the crucial Council of Chalcedon in 451. The pope of the time, Leo I, was cool towards its convocation. He had written his long letter, the so-called 'Tome of Leo', to Flavian, patriarch of Constantinople, and regarded it as sufficient to refute the monophysitism of Eutyches. As a result he was unenthusiastic when Empress Pulcheria, the dominant figure in ecclesiastical matters at the Byzantine court, urged the calling of a council to resolve the crisis caused by Eutyches's teaching. Pulcheria had her way and the council was duly convoked. At it, moreover, while Leo's Tome was approved and quoted at some length, the council went on to give its own teaching and to accord it the greater authority.

The difference of opinion regarding the need for the Council of Chalcedon should not be seen as evidence of the incompatibility of pope and council. Rather, councils needed to be complemented by a range of other institutions and authorities: bishops, who constituted the core members of any ecumenical council, as mentioned; the five patriarchal sees of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and eventually Jerusalem – amongst which Rome was accorded seniority – whose approval came to be regarded as necessary for the validity of a council; also the emperor or occasionally the empress of the Eastern Roman Empire, who formally promulgated the council's decrees. In addition, the decrees can only be understood against the background of a great deal of preceding theological debate and writing. The creeds and other doctrinal statements of the councils represent the peaks of a mountain range rather than its foothills. But peaks indeed they are, without rivals as beacons in the tradition of the faith.

Secondly, the councils are remarkable in comparison with other representative institutions. Compared to the Althing of Iceland or the Parliament of Britain, for example, which are usually considered the oldest national assemblies with an institutional continuity in Europe, the ecumenical councils of the Christian church yield a much longer history. The first Althing dates from around 930 and the earliest Parliament is usually dated to 1257. The first Council of Nicaea was held in 325 and the seventh ecumenical council, Nicaea II in 787, had already taken place well before the first Althing. No other continent, so far as I am aware, possesses national assemblies or other representative institutions with a longstanding continuity that is comparable to that of the councils.

In this respect the councils are also remarkable in view of the difficulty of their business. It is hard enough for a national assembly or the United Nations to agree on concrete issues such as taxation or international law. Far more difficult is it to reach agreement on the mysteries of religious faith, which transcend this world and touch the divine, or to update the faith into contemporary language. This is especially the case for Christianity in view of the exalted nature of its claims, notably regarding the Trinity and Incarnation. Yet the early councils as well as the later ones succeeded to a remarkable extent in these endeavours. For a national assembly, moreover, a majority vote is usually sufficient to pass a law, while unanimity, or virtual unanimity, has traditionally been required for doctrinal statements in ecumenical councils. Such consensus on such difficult matters is indeed another miracle of grace and of the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, the councils distinguish Christianity from other world religions. No other religion can show a comparable record. Christianity alone, so far as I am aware, has sought to update itself continuously through such a series of gatherings representing, in some sense, all its believers. In this sense Christianity is unique for the seriousness with which it takes tradition and history. Councils have produced a remarkable forum in which this updating and development of doctrine has been possible.

Lessons for Tomorrow

The seven ecumenical councils of the early Church are not like an antique object that we examine in a museum; rather they are a treasure from which we can draw for the future. Just as the councils represent the living tradition of the Church, so this tradition stretches into the future. In general, we see remarkable imagination and creativity in the councils in question and this encourages Christians to bring to bear the same qualities in the future.

Place of Councils

The first reflection concerns the place of the councils. All seven of them were held in the eastern half of the Roman Empire rather than in the West. Four of them took place in Asia (Nicaea I and II, Ephesus and Chalcedon) – western Asia, it is true, very western from the point of view of India and China, and really a part of the Mediterranean world, but Asia nonetheless – and three in Europe (the three councils of Constantinople), if one accepts the Bosphorus Straits as the boundary between the two continents. None of them was held in

Rome, which has held sway as the principal place for general councils of the Western church only since the beginning of the East–West schism in 1054.

This means, of course, there is no reason in principle why the next ecumenical council should not be held away from Rome and Europe: perhaps in Brasilia, New York, Kinshasa, Manila, or Bangalore! Just as the election of the Polish pope John Paul II returned the papacy to its more international roots after a succession of Italian popes that had lasted almost 500 years, so the next – or more realistically the next-but-one – council may revisit the Church's non-European roots.

These extra-European possibilities for ecumenical councils of the future, as well as for the Church more widely, will be discussed further below.[3]

Supervision of Councils

A second reflection is that all seven councils were summoned, presided over either directly or through their officials, and the decrees promulgated, by lay people, namely the eastern emperor of the time, or, in two cases, the empress: namely, Pulcheria at Chalcedon and Irene at Nicaea II. The custom that it is the pope, the bishop of Rome, who summons and promulgates an ecumenical council has been acknowledged in the Catholic Church only since the beginning of the schism between the Eastern and Western churches in the eleventh century.

I am not sure of the moral of this observation. Clearly the provisions of canon law, which presently state that it belongs to the pope alone to summon and approve an ecumenical council, should be observed.[4] On the other hand, Church laws can be changed and so it may well be that sometime in the future lay people, including women, will have a much more prominent role in ecumenical councils than they have enjoyed in recent times. The Holy Spirit blows where She wills. The precedent of lay authority at the early councils makes a return to it acceptable from an ecclesiological and canonical standpoint.

To push the point a little further, the emperor Constantine, who summoned and presided over the first Council of Nicaea in 325, was not even a Christian at the time according to our present-day criteria, inasmuch as he had not yet been baptised. He delayed baptism until death was close, following a custom of the time, in the hope that he would thus pass straight to heaven, avoiding penance in this life and purgatory in the next. In this way we see the Spirit working in this first ecumenical council from outside the visible Church and maybe we shall see more of this extra-ecclesial action in the future?

Language

Latin has been the official language of all recent councils that are recognised by the Catholic Church as ecumenical; Greek was the language of the first seven councils. What of the future? At Vatican II there was a move among a good number of council members to allow vernacular languages for official business, but the move was defeated, except in the case of some patriarchs of Oriental Catholic churches, for example Maximos IV, the Melkite patriarch of Antioch, who insisted on speaking in French – how ironic that he chose a Western language! At the next ecumenical council it seems almost inconceivable that Latin will be maintained as the sole official language. Whether a short-list of approved languages will be drawn up or many will be allowed, we must wait to see. As an Englishman and therefore partial in the matter maybe I should not comment further. Still, I dare to say that perhaps we should not fear too much the prospect of English being adopted as the official language in view of its widespread use. Twice before the Catholic Church has been bold enough to accept the language that was most widely used among its believers and the wider world, rather than remain with a language that had become outdated or too narrow in its focus. Thus it moved from Semitic languages to Greek in the second century and from Greek to Latin in the Middle Ages. In both cases, moreover, one language only was adopted for its ecumenical councils. Maybe a third change of this kind will be made before long?

As an historian I make a more personal observation here. It has taken me a great deal of effort to gain some mastery of the two languages essential for a study of the councils, Greek and Latin. In researching Vatican II,[5] I was grateful that Latin was retained as the sole language of official business; even though, as mentioned, its retention was unpopular with many council members. To read the speeches and other documents in Latin was burden enough; the thought of attempting them in Tamil, Malayalam and Hindi, as well as a thousand other languages, would have been daunting indeed and the task quite beyond my capability.

Inculturation versus Counter-Culturalism

The willingness to choose suitable locations for the councils, to accept and benefit from existing political structures, and to adopt the *lingua franca* of the day, are all signs of the early Church's boldness in adapting to the situations in which it found itself – inculturation in the broad and best sense of the word.

In these and other respects the councils were ready to accept what was good and most suitable in society and then to improve on it. In all sorts of ways they show the Church as being abreast – indeed ahead – of its time not just in religious matters but also in social, political and cultural affairs.

The scale of representation afforded by the councils in question was without parallel in secular society. Professor Henry Chadwick has shown that the earliest ecumenical councils we know of were gatherings of actors, athletes and linen-workers, or their representatives, from various parts of the Roman Empire – ecumenical therefore in the word's basic meaning of representing the whole known inhabited world (οἰκουμενική means literally 'where there are houses').[6] The Church then took over the term 'ecumenical council' for its own gatherings and gave the expression a Christian context. In so doing it both accepted and improved on what it found.

No other institution of importance maintained a comparable degree of representation. The senates in Rome and Constantinople, which were perhaps the closest equivalents in secular society, were much more limited in terms of both representation and authority. It is noticeable, too, that we are far better informed about the proceedings and decisions of the councils than of the two senates.

The roles of the empresses Pulcheria and Irene at the councils of Chalcedon and Nicaea II have been noted. Their interventions are notable though not extraordinary in terms of the social and political conventions of the time. They show the councils were at least as open to women as was secular society, perhaps more so. Canon 19 of Nicaea I speaks of lay deaconesses and canon 15 of Chalcedon went further in permitting the ordination of women as deacons, albeit in restricted circumstances.[7] We know that an early bishop of Rome, Callixtus I (217–22), had been a slave and it seems likely that a sprinkling of bishops at the early ecumenical councils had similar backgrounds. Regarding two basic social groups, women and slaves, the councils therefore appear at least abreast of the times, perhaps somewhat ahead.[8]

Canon 5 of Nicaea I provided for regular provincial councils at which individuals could appeal against sentences of excommunication imposed by their bishops.[9] Christians, especially those from the lower ranks of society, were thus well provided with means of redress in comparison with what they might hope for in secular society. Public penance, which was accorded detailed treatment in the canons of Nicaea, asserted in a striking way both a certain egalitarianism and the dignity of each person. Penitents, according to these canons, were not distinguished by their social or economic status but all underwent both penance and reconciliation together.[10]

In these and other ways the councils both accepted what was best in society and improved upon it, providing inculturation and leadership in the best sense. Today a big danger for the Church is an exaggerated counter-culturalism: emphasising that the Church has its own teachings, procedures and organisation that have nothing to do with the ways of the world, that indeed they are opposites. The rejection of democracy in the Church or an exaggerated emphasis upon authority and hierarchy in the Church are examples of this danger.

This question of inculturation is dealt with in greater detail below. Here it must suffice to note the promising example of the early ecumenical councils.

Conclusion

Considering that no one knows when the next ecumenical council will take place, it may seem presumptuous to talk about lessons for the future. The most important lesson of all is surely to recognise the action of the Holy Spirit in the councils. They are such a miracle of grace that without the Spirit they cannot be understood. The Spirit is full of surprises and successful councils have often come unexpectedly, never more so than with Vatican II.

In suggesting lessons for tomorrow, therefore, I am not trying to predict the future. In looking at the early councils, rather, we have been able to see a range of past possibilities some of which may resurface in the future.

I have mentioned here variations in the past as well as continuities. The most encouraging of these continuities is the simple fact that the seven ecumenical councils took place. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and with the necessary human cooperation and initiative, these largely successful councils took place at opportune times, guiding the Church through many centuries. This alone gives much hope for the future.

Councils and Collegiality in the Early Church: Regional Councils

In this second lecture[1] our attention will turn away from the seven ecumenical councils of the early Church to regional councils: a move away, if you will, from the high peaks of the mountain range to some lesser peaks. But just as lower mountains have their own fascination – as many climbers will tell you – and should not be considered only as the preliminary steps that need to be taken before the high peaks can he climbed and the view from the top be seen, so too regional councils were not just preparations for ecumenical councils. They are of interest in their own right both in terms of their pronouncements and of their procedures and the culture and values they represent.

It is a mistake, too, to see regional councils simply as lower-level councils of little authority in comparison with ecumenical councils. Such an attitude reveals a modern misunderstanding about the nature of authority in the Church, partly an unintended result of Vatican I's proclamation of papal infallibility and of over-emphasis upon papal teaching. That is to say, there has grown up in the last century and a half a dangerous dichotomy between the teaching of ecumenical councils and the papacy on the one hand and all other teaching on the other. The former touches on papal infallibility and therefore is to be exalted whereas the latter is not and so can be dismissed as of little consequence.

Regional councils were, in reality, one of the most important factors in the growth and vitality of the Church during its first millennium. There was then much less of a dichotomy between them and, on the other hand, ecumenical councils and other institutions of church government. They went hand in hand with each other; each was dependent upon and understandable in terms of the other. The subsequent gradual demise of regional councils in the Middle Ages and later will be discussed below. This demise of regional councils, and the culture of dialogue they embodied, has been one of the

greatest blows in the history of the Church, a principal reason why the Church has found it so difficult to remain up to date.

These are sweeping statements, but how do the facts support them?

Frequency and Roles

The classic collection of conciliar material edited by Giovanni Mansi and his successors, *Sacrorum conciliorum*, reveals the remarkable number of regional councils during the Church's first millennium. Fifty-three volumes in the final version of this monumental work, each averaging more than 600 folio-size pages, take the councils down to 1870.[2] The ecumenical councils are well covered yet the large majority of pages are devoted to regional councils. More recently, C. Munier and C. de Clerq have edited in the 'Corpus Christianorum' series the surviving records of regional councils of the fourth to seventh centuries in two parts of the ancient Roman Empire, namely Africa (that is, the Roman province of Africa, which occupied the Latin-speaking western half of North Africa) and Gaul (that is, principally modern France but also including some neighbouring areas in modern Belgium, Germany and Switzerland).[3] For just the city of Carthage in North Africa, according to Munier, records survive of 18 regional councils between 393 and 419. For many of them we know little more than that they took place. Our knowledge, therefore, both in terms of the number of councils held and of the topics treated, is only the tip of the iceberg of what was in fact going on. It should be remembered, moreover, that the total Christian population in the early Church was only a fraction of what it is today – at most 50 million at any given time in comparison with over a billion today – which makes the number and quality of the councils all the more remarkable. Undoubtedly regional councils were at the centre of Church order in a way they cannot be considered to be today, at least in the Roman Catholic Church.

The strongest statement of the importance of regional councils in the early Church comes from canon 5 of Nicaea I in 325. The canon concerns excommunication and it ends with regulations regarding the rights of those excommunicated to appeal to a provincial council against their sentence.

> Concerning those, whether of the clergy or of the laity, who have been excommunicated, the sentence is to be respected by the bishops of each province, according to the canon which forbids those expelled by some to be admitted by others. But let an inquiry be held to ascertain whether anyone has been expelled from the

community because of pettiness or quarrelsomeness or any such ill nature on the part of the bishop. Accordingly, in order that there may be proper opportunity for inquiry into the matter, it is agreed that it would be well for synods to be held each year in each province twice a year, so that these inquiries may be conducted by all the bishops of the province assembled together, and in this way by general consent those who have offended against their own bishop may be recognised by all to be reasonably excommunicated, until all the bishops in common may decide to pronounce a more lenient sentence on these persons. The synods shall be held at the following times: one before Lent, so that, all pettiness being set aside, the gift offered to God may be unblemished; the second after the season of autumn.[4]

The purpose of the council, according to the canon, was disciplinary: to provide a mechanism for deciding about excommunications. Discipline, or Church order, remained a fundamental role of regional councils in the early Church but they were not afraid of discussing the great theological issues of the day. To generalise, whereas decisions about doctrine were the principal concern of the ecumenical councils of the Church's first millennium and those about Church order were important but secondary, for the regional councils, taken as a whole, the order was reversed; though in a fair number of the latter, especially when doctrinal controversies were particularly acute, theological issues predominated. Often, as one would expect, doctrinal and disciplinary issues were interlinked and cannot be separated out.

The importance of councils in the life and government of the Church was emphasised by the second Council of Constantinople in 553, as discussed above. This was an ecumenical council speaking primarily about other ecumenical councils, but the passage seems to have in mind councils more generally, to be commending discussion at all levels in the Church. Here again is its central message.

[These councils] dealt with heresies and current problems by debate in common, since it was established as certain that when the disputed question is set out by each side in communal discussions, the light of truth drives out the shadows of lying. The truth cannot be made clear in any other way when there are debates about questions of faith, since everyone requires the assistance of his neighbour.[5]

What was the influence of regional councils in the early Church? This is a difficult question to answer and we must beware of imposing modern notions of direct influence: as if there was almost a direct chain of command in the way that diocesan, provincial and other regional councils influenced ecumenical councils. Of course there was influence of one council upon another. We may think of the influence of Antioch and other regional councils in 324 and early 325 upon the first (ecumenical) Council of Nicaea later in the year 325; that of Sardica in *c.* 343 upon the successful reception of Nicaea; the influence of the Council of Rome in 680 upon the diothelite teaching (that there are two wills, human and divine, in Jesus Christ) of Constantinople III (680–81). Or the direct negative influence, in the sense that it produced a reaction, of the Council of Sirmium in 357 and its so-called 'Blasphemy', or the 'Robber' Council of Ephesus in 449 which led to the reaction of Chalcedon, or the iconoclastic teaching of Hieria in 757 which was countered by the iconophile decisions of Nicaea II (787). But we must beware of a false teleological view of Church history: one that, looking back from where the Church is today, sees the developments that have occurred as inevitable and wants, as a result, to find the links in the chain of development. The actual situation was far more fluid, the end result less inevitable, at least in human terms. Another point is that it was not until the Council of Chalcedon in 451 that the list of ecumenical councils came to be fixed. Beforehand, and for many communities long after, it was not clear which councils should be considered ecumenical and therefore binding upon all Christians. As a result, the distinction between ecumenical and regional councils, including the difference in their respective authorities, was often unclear.

Keeping the Church Abreast and Ahead of Its Time

More important than looking for the precise influence of one council upon another, or upon the Church more generally, is the fact that councils were being held frequently and in many places. There was a general atmosphere of debate: councils, regional and other, provided a forum for views to be expressed and heard. The comments of Gregory of Nyssa regarding popular debate about the Trinity are well known. With the continuing Arian controversy in mind, he had this to say about the city of Constantinople in the late fourth century:

> If, in this city, you ask anyone to change money, the money-changer
> will first discuss with you whether the Son of God is begotten or

unbegotten. If you ask about the quality of bread, you will receive the answer that the Father is greater than the Son. If you suggest you require a bath, the bath-attendant will first tell you that there was nothing before the Son was created![6]

Gregory was speaking – somewhat tongue in cheek – in the aftermath of an ecumenical council, Constantinople I in 381, yet his comments might well also apply to the ambience surrounding regional councils.

Regional councils helped to keep the early Church up to date, indeed ahead of its time. We can see this in terms both of Church order and government and of doctrine. In all sorts of ways the early Church was ahead of its time in the social and political orders. I have already suggested this, in the essay above regarding the ecumenical councils. More research could profitably be done on the same questions regarding regional councils of the period; the issues of representation and inculturation, the roles of women and of those from the lower social ranks, and so forth.

Of course we must beware of being over-optimistic in this respect. Bishops were the core members of regional councils and in this sense the assemblies were quite hierarchical and masculine. Some families or individuals dominated the councils of a region just as they dominated its main episcopal see. We may think of the power – political, economic and even military – of Paul of Samosata, who was bishop of the important see of Antioch until he was deposed by the regional council held in that city in 268; or various families who held sway over the see of Alexandria in Egypt and hence over the councils in that region. Even so, councils probably meant that Christians sensed their voices were heard and their concerns met to a greater extent than most people in society at large.

Today, on the contrary, the Church is in danger of falling into the pernicious trap of exaggerated counter-culturalism. While in the first millennium Christians accepted what was best in the forms of secular government and then went beyond them, today many in the Church are placing excessive emphasis on the government of the Church being different from that of secular society – that the Church has its own hierarchical forms of government that have nothing to do with secular democracy – and on the need for Christians to be counter-cultural. Earlier the Church had less fear of other institutions: it was readier to adopt for itself the good elements in them, to use and then to improve upon them, to give a lead in society rather than to follow reluctantly or to distance itself unnecessarily. We saw a revival of this leadership in society and government, on the part of the Church, at the time

of Vatican II, but the momentum does not seem to have been maintained. The councils of the past, including regional councils, open our eyes to hopeful possibilities in this regard for the future.

An eye for the future appears in the teaching of the early councils as well as in their institutional forms. They produced creeds and other doctrinal statements that endured for many centuries, indeed until the present day. They were able to find words and expressions that not only brought the Church abreast of its time but somehow successfully foresaw developments in the future.

How can this remarkable achievement be explained? Two factors seem to be decisive. The first one is the frequency and regularity of councils. They formed a continuous, ongoing process in which regional councils were essential. Above them, so to speak, were the ecumenical councils and it is their statements that we chiefly remember, but these can only be understood within the framework of many regional and local councils.

Secondly, there is the principle of unanimity. I mentioned the point briefly with regard to ecumenical councils. But to repeat: councils were not like the Lok Sabha in Delhi, or Parliament in my own country of Britain, or most other national assemblies, where a majority of one is sufficient to pass a law. For the councils of the Church, unanimity, or virtual unanimity, has always been sought. Their decrees, therefore, are the result of consensus rather than of a majority verdict. As such they reflect the collective thought and experience of many individuals, both those who attended the councils in question and many others who were directly or indirectly involved in their preparation. They show the collective thought of the Church, local or universal, and so are more likely to be prescient towards the future than are the ideas of one or a few individuals; however necessary individual initiatives may be on occasion.

Regional Councils and the Future

The subsequent demise of regional councils during the second millennium AD, which will be discussed in the next essay, represents one of the gravest wounds in Christian history. The lack of these and similar forums for discussion is an obvious reason why the Church has failed to keep abreast of the times or to give a more credible lead. It may also be seen as a major reason why Christianity has made little impact on the other major world religions of Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam as well as upon the rationalism of the Enlightenment in Europe and upon modern and post-modern secularism. Christianity's success in its second millennium was largely, in terms

of conversions, among peoples of more primitive beliefs and religions. Its relative failure with more sophisticated belief-systems is striking and surely due in part to the absence of proper structures for debate among Christians. Regional councils were a resource of the early Church, a treasure that would be highly relevant today and surely much prized by any successful business organisation or government, yet it has largely been thrown away. The Church now appears constantly on the defensive in the face of modern civilisation and its challenges. It may flourish in time of persecution or in a minority situation, yet as soon as some material prosperity arrives or a new situation emerges it seems incapable of coping in a positive way. The brilliance of the Christian message is dimmed by the inability to adopt appropriate structures for its assimilation and proclamation. This is in marked contrast to the early Church when, in part thanks to regional councils, the Christian community grew remarkably in size, in depth of understanding and practice of the faith, and in the ability to dialogue with and challenge, seriously and effectively, the prominent cultures and religions of its time.

In the desire to update the Church, much attention has recently been given to reform of the papacy and the possibility of another ecumenical council. Pope John Paul II invited ideas about reform of the papacy in his encyclical *Ut unum sint* (1995) and the invitation was taken up by, for example, Archbishop Quinn of San Francisco, USA, in his widely acclaimed book, *The Reform of the Papacy* (New York: Crossroad, 1999). Cardinal Martini of Milan, and others, have indicated the desirability of another ecumenical council. Too much hope, in my opinion, should not be put upon reform of the papacy and the Roman Curia. It is notoriously difficult for any institution to reform itself, so there may be an unacceptably long wait for such reform. Ecumenical councils, at least the more successful ones, seem to come unexpectedly. Few expected Vatican II, and even fewer foresaw its remarkable success. The Holy Spirit blows where She wills. My own feeling is that Vatican II has not yet been properly digested and having another ecumenical council soon might be more divisive than helpful. Regional councils, on the other hand, present a surer and more predictable basis. That they take place regularly is more important than precisely what they discuss and decide: they are deeply rooted in the Church's tradition and therefore of impeccable orthodoxy. They can be revived and promoted without awkward questions about their legitimacy.

Regional councils, moreover, are important for the Roman Catholic Church's ecumenical progress with other Christian churches. All the other mainstream churches accept some form of conciliar government and criticise the Catholic Church, explicitly or implicitly, for having largely abandoned

it in favour of more hierarchical institutions. As a result, the only forms of government that are likely to be acceptable to these other traditions, in a united Church, are those with a conciliar basis. Emphasis is often laid upon the need to call a new ecumenical council at which all the churches will be represented. Maybe this is right but ecumenical councils are usually 'one off' occasions and waiting for the next one may be waiting too long. Regional councils are a sounder and more realistic possibility. They can be promoted, as mentioned, as being fully in conformity with the early tradition of the Catholic Church and in accord with the practices of other Christian churches, as institutions that can readily take root again without the need to wait upon the unpredictability of an ecumenical council and without engaging in the negativity that criticism of the papacy often entails.

Conclusion

Regional councils form an important middle layer between ecumenical councils on the one hand and more local councils on the other hand. This middle layer is particularly relevant for today when many people seek some regional identity, an identity lying somewhere between that of belonging to the world community and that of belonging to a village or parish. Regions are coming to be seen as increasingly important in our global society. While people want to be part of the whole human family, they also seek smaller units of which the region – be it a region within a country, or a whole country, or a group of countries – is coming increasingly to be appreciated. For Christians, therefore, regional councils seem well suited to the twenty-first century.

You will notice that throughout this essay I have not attempted to define 'regional council'. I think we all have a good idea what the term means, even though we may not be able to define it precisely. As proof of the vagueness of the term we may note that the 1983 Code of Canon Law, as well as the index of the Canon Law Society of America's *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), both provide entries on ecumenical councils, episcopal and finance councils, parish pastoral councils, plenary, presbyteral, provincial and religious councils, but none on regional councils! There seems to be no clear definition of a regional council and that may be a good thing. It lies somewhere between an ecumenical and a diocesan council, but precisely where may best be left vague. There was never any attempt in the early or medieval church, or even later, so far as I am aware, to define precisely the status of a regional council in the way that such an attempt was made for ecumenical, provincial and diocesan councils.

'Council' comes from the Latin *concilium*, to 'call together.' 'Synod', the parallel word, from the Greek σύνοδος, is more evocative, deriving from the two words σύν, 'together', and ὁδός, 'way' or 'journey': people making a journey together, a beautiful image of the pilgrimage church. There is nothing mysterious about a church council, basically it is just Christians coming together to discuss matters important to them. These assemblies offer many possibilities and great flexibility. The first part of this booklet dealt with some of the possibilities offered by the first seven ecumenical councils. This part extended the search to the middle layer of regional councils. Only a few of the further possibilities afforded by the latter have been noted and the importance of further research into their composition and procedures has been urged. While much work has been devoted to the study of ecumenical councils during Christianity's first millennium, far less has been given to regional councils during this time. We are only at the beginning of understanding them and what they may imply for the Church of today and tomorrow.

Finally, while the main focus has been on the somewhat ill-defined 'regional councils', it seems likely that most of what has been said would apply to councils of a more local nature: though here too further research is needed.

Middle Ages, Trent and After

In the previous lecture I described the demise of regional councils after the period of the early Church as one of the gravest wounds in the history of Christianity. The lack of regional and other local councils as forums for discussion and decision-making among Christians was, I suggested, a key factor in the gradual failure of Christianity to keep abreast of the times and to give a more credible lead, to engage seriously with other major world religions and with modern rationalism and secularism. In this section, therefore, I would like to chart briefly this demise and its consequences; the decline not only of regional and other local councils but also, in many respects, of ecumenical councils.

Decline of Councils

If we date the beginning of the demise to shortly after the second Council of Nicaea in 787, then we are dealing with well over a millennium of Church history.

I would like to begin, however, with some qualifications to my thesis. There were many brilliant achievements of Christianity during this long millennium. Living in Europe myself, where the signs of these achievements are everywhere to be seen, as well as being an historian of medieval Europe, I am well aware and appreciative of them. There are the churches – cathedrals, parish churches, churches of religious orders, and many others – with their fine architecture and sensitive religious art within; the original theologians, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Henry Newman, to mention only the best known; mystics such as Catherine of Siena, Julian of Norwich, John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila; evangelists and missionaries such as Francis Xavier, John Wesley and his brother Charles; new religious orders – Cistercians, Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, numerous orders of

women; developments in liturgy, music, and religious art; practical concern for the poor and vulnerable, attempts to create a genuinely Christian society. All this, and so much else that could be mentioned. Christianity today cannot be understood apart from its medieval and early modern heritage and is hugely indebted to it.

The relative decline of councils during this period, therefore, is only one aspect of Christian history and must be balanced with the many positive achievements. Maybe, too, it was, in part, according to divine Providence that the decline should occur inasmuch as it came about through a combination of factors that, as we shall see, were partly responsible for the many positive achievements. Both results, positive and negative, may have been linked to some extent providentially.

The decline of councils was more in quality than quantity. In terms of numbers, the list of ecumenical and general councils traditionally recognised as such by the Roman Catholic Church[1] gives nine councils in the Middle Ages from Lateran I in 1123 to Basel-Florence in 1431–45, as well as Lateran V and Trent in the sixteenth century; that is, eleven spread over six centuries, which is roughly the same frequency as the seven councils from Nicaea I in 325 to Nicaea II in 787. Regarding councils of lesser authority, the volumes of Mansi's *Sacrorum conciliorum*[2] reveals the large number of them that took place during this time.

There remains, however, a sharp difference in quality. It may be summed up by saying that the councils of the second millennium were largely 'from above' whereas those of the first millennium were much more 'from below'.

Thus the general councils of the early Middle Ages – the six councils from Lateran I in 1123 to Lyons II in 1274 – are often called 'papal' councils inasmuch as they were summoned by the pope of the time, the legislation was prepared before the council took place by the pope and Roman Curia, so that the work of the council was little more than to approve, or rubber-stamp, the already prepared decrees, and finally it was the pope alone who promulgated the decrees. There was relatively little discussion or making of the decrees by the councils. There was an attempted return to a more 'from below' approach at the controversial councils of Constance and Basel in the early fifteenth century. But this 'conciliar approach' failed and papal supremacy was reasserted. Trent, the great Council of the Counter-Reformation, lies somewhere in the middle. The papacy kept a measure of control over the council through the three papal legates who presided over the proceedings; on the other hand Trent's decrees had not been prepared beforehand by the papacy and Roman Curia but rather they emerged from the debates in the council.

This 'from above' approach then impacted upon regional and other local councils. To put it simply, their role changed from initiating discussion and action, as had been the case in many local councils of the early Church, to that of implementing or communicating the decisions of higher authority: either ecumenical councils or the papacy. This new and reduced role is well illustrated by the example of medieval England, most notably the diocesan, provincial and national councils that were held in the thirteenth century. These assemblies, though numerous and energetic, were, nevertheless, largely confined to implementing the decisions of the higher authority, that of the fourth Lateran Council of 1215. They provided relatively little independent discussion or initiative.[3] In the aftermath of the Council of Trent (1545–63), local councils at all levels were dominated by the implementation of Trent's decrees. Those held by Cardinal Charles Borromeo in his huge archdiocese of Milan in the late sixteenth century are obvious examples. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there were regional councils of more independence, especially in France and the German-speaking lands, but they came to be associated with schism: with Gallicanism in France and Febronianism in Germany. The whole conciliar programme again fell under a cloud of suspicion. Hostility to general or ecumenical councils, on the grounds that they might lead to a revival of the claims made in the fifteenth century by the councils of Constance and Basel to superiority over the papacy, filtered down to a suspicion of all councils as possible rivals to papal authority.

Fear of the conciliar ghost remains with us today in many quarters of the Roman Catholic Church. The restriction to an advisory role, and to a tightly controlled agenda, of the recently established biennial synods of bishops, is one example of this fear; hostility to initiative on the part of episcopal conferences is another.

Causes of the Decline

There are several major reasons for this decline of councils in the medieval and early modern periods.

East–West Schism

The original and arguably most important reason is the East–West schism, the beginning of which is traditionally dated to the mutual exchange of excommunications between the two churches of Rome and Constantinople in

1054. At first the schism seemed temporary and no more serious than several earlier breaks in communion, but in fact this time the breach was not healed and has remained until today. However blame for the schism is apportioned, one thing is certain: it deprived the Western church of the companionship of her Eastern sister. One great loss for the Western church, as a result, was the conciliar tradition that was central to order and government in the eyes of the Eastern church. The issue was not outwardly prominent in the outbreak of the schism but it was a major underlying factor. It went back at least to the time of the patriarch Photius of Constantinople in the ninth century, for whom the increased claims of the papacy to universal authority and jurisdiction constituted a direct threat to the other patriarchs and to the conciliar government of the Church. It is noticeable too that the schism in 1054 came about in the absence of ecumenical councils. No such council was called quickly to try to resolve the dispute and none had been held for almost three centuries beforehand since Nicaea II in 787, apart from controversial Constantinople IV in 870–71.[4] Lack of what the East could regard as a genuinely ecumenical council, as well as further exaltation of papal claims, remained core issues in the continuance of the schism in the medieval period. It is noticeable that the two most serious attempts at healing the schism during this time both came about through councils at which there was some Eastern representation, albeit not enough to persuade the Eastern church to 'receive' their decisions: the second Council of Lyons in 1274 and, more importantly, the Council of Florence in 1439.

Gregorian Reform

A second and linked reason for the demise of councils was the so-called Gregorian Reform movement. Named after its most famous leader, Pope Gregory VII (1073–85), the original aims of the movement touched mainly upon the internal reform of the Western church, principally to free it from what was seen as unwarranted lay control. The papacy soon saw itself – and was seen by many others – as the only institution within the Church that had sufficient authority to stand up to kings and princes and other powerful laity and so to bring about the liberation. The resulting exaltation of papal claims, therefore, was initially directed against the rights of the laity to intervene in Church affairs. It soon spilled over, however, into more general claims of papal supremacy over all institutions within the Church, including over councils, as well as over the Eastern church, now in schism, which was the principal defender of the conciliar ideal.

It was not that councils were forbidden; indeed the Gregorian Reform movement witnessed a considerable number of them, including regional councils. Rather the change was that they became very much 'from above' councils, whose principal purpose was to enforce papal policies rather than to initiate dialogue and discussion of the issues in question. The change is highlighted by several statements in the *Dictatus Papae* of Pope Gregory VII, a document whose authority is much debated but which surely reflected the pope's mind-set since it was copied into his official Register. Thus, headings of the *Dictatus* read as follows: (2) That the Roman pontiff alone is rightly to be called universal; (4) That the pope's legate, even if of lower grade, takes precedence over all bishops in a council and may render a sentence of deposition against them; (7) That for the pope alone is it lawful to enact new laws according to the needs of the time and to assemble together new councils; (16) That no synod may be called a general one without his order. In addition, the whole tenor of the *Dictatus* was to assert papal supremacy and that major initiatives in the Church belonged almost to the pope alone.

This change to a 'from above' approach to councils showed itself very clearly in the general councils after Pope Gregory VII, the six from Lateran I in 1123 to Lyons II in 1274 that are often called 'papal councils', as mentioned earlier.

Conciliarism at Constance and Basel

A third reason for the demise of councils was the disastrous conflict between pope and council that occurred during the councils of Constance and Basel in the fifteenth century. After the two centuries dominated by the agenda of the Gregorian Reform, a reaction was already well under way by about 1300. The next general council, Vienne in 1311–12, was dominated not by the pope, Clement V, but by the anti-clerical king of France, Philip IV 'le Bel', who was able to push through the council various measures that were perceived as hostile to the Church, most notably the suppression of the religious order of Templars. The international and spiritual status of the papacy was further compromised by the so-called 'Avignon Captivity', the 70 years from 1307 to 1377 when the papacy moved from Rome and settled in the city of Avignon in southern France. While in many respects the administration there was conducted very efficiently, the papacy seemed to be subjected to the interests of France, then the most powerful country in Christendom. All seven popes of the period, most of the cardinals, and the large majority of papal officials, were Frenchmen. Pope Gregory XI, the last of the Avignon popes, finally

returned to Rome in 1378 but his death in the same year led to a disputed election and there followed almost 40 years of schism when there were two and later three claimants to the papacy, with the countries of Europe as well as saints and theologians divided in their allegiances.

It was in this scandalous situation of schism that a council was summoned by the leading lay ruler of the day, Emperor Sigismund V of Germany, to the city of Constance in southern Germany, in order to resolve the crisis. The council soon came to be rejected by all three claimants to the papacy and it was in this context that the council promulgated its famous decrees *Haec sancta*, which asserted the superiority of a general council over the pope, at least in this emergency situation, and thereby sought to regularise and justify its proceedings. It then deposed two of the papal claimants, persuaded the third to resign, and conducted the successful election of Martin V, who was soon almost universally recognised as pope. Thus the schism was brought to an end. Meanwhile the council had also issued the decree *Frequens*, which established a mechanism whereby general councils would be called on a regular ten-yearly basis, thus attempting – at least in the eyes of the decree's opponents – to wrest the government of the Church, and the programme of reform, into the council's hands and away from the papacy.

These measures, especially the two decrees *Haec sancta* and *Frequens*, brought a sharp reaction from Martin V's successor, Eugenius IV, who reigned as pope from 1431 to 1447. Although a council convened in Basel in Switzerland in 1431, following the summons of Pope Martin and the regulations of the decree *Frequens*, Pope Eugenius IV, who had meanwhile succeeded as pope following Martin's death, showed himself hostile to it from the outset and eventually managed to outmanoeuvre it. He transferred the council to Florence in Italy, against the wishes of the majority at Basel. Then, following the spectacular success of the council in Florence in achieving a reunion with the Eastern church – albeit short-lived – Eugenius further condemned the remaining council at Basel and it eventually dissolved itself. In the short term, the conciliar movement was more or less defeated.

Reformation and Counter-Reformation

The taste of the bitter disputes at Constance and Basel has remained with the Church. It leads to a consideration of the fourth cause of the demise of councils, the effects of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation.

Although the papacy gained the immediate victory over the Council of Basel, the issues at stake remained largely unresolved. The majority opinion

among Christians, during the 70 years or so after the council and before the beginning of the Reformation in 1517, appears to have represented a middle position, showing support for the principle of holding councils as a way of initiating the much-needed reform of the Church but at the same time rejecting the more extreme positions for and against councils that had been proposed by Basel and the papacy respectively.

When Martin Luther clashed with the papacy and other Church authorities, beginning in 1517, he initially appealed to a general council to settle the issues; though he quickly abandoned this line of approach and appealed exclusively to the authority of Scripture. All the mainline churches of the Reformation – Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans, and others – recognised, with varying degrees of emphasis, that synods (they usually preferred this word to 'councils' because it was the one normally used by the early Church) should be central to Church order and government. They argued that this was the form of government found in Scripture, notably the Council of Jerusalem as described in the Acts of the Apostles, and their leaders had grown up under the residual influence of the conciliarism of Constance and Basel.

Despite the attachment of the churches of the Reformation to the principle of synodical or conciliar government, the effectiveness of this attachment has been diminished by two factors. First, their emphasis upon the overriding or exclusive authority of Scripture has meant that the role of any forms of Church government, including councils, is of very subordinate importance. Secondly, the Reformation soon splintered into many different churches, so that while synodical government has undoubtedly been of great importance for the continuance and fruitful ministry of these churches individually, because of these divisions between them it has not proved possible for more general councils to be held in which most or all the Protestant churches participated. The World Council of Churches based in Geneva, Switzerland, comes perhaps closest to this possibility.

The Counter-Reformation of the Catholic Church, at least in its more strident forms, tended to assert ever more vigorously what it saw as the core identity of the Roman Catholic Church and to reject whatever was proposed by the Protestants. As a result, councils were seen as dangerously Protestant and increasing emphasis was placed upon papal authority. This is an oversimplification and the reality was more complex. Indeed, at the heart of the Counter-Reformation lay the Council of Trent, which in many ways was an exceptionally successful assembly, despite its inability to heal the division between Catholics and Protestants. It lasted, on and off, with two long gaps in its proceedings in the middle, for 18 years from 1545 to 1563. It discussed

almost all the issues in the Reformation controversies and promulgated detailed decrees on them. Especially in its early decrees, moreover, notably those on Scripture and on justification, the council took on board many of the points made by the Reformers. It was not simply a hammer of Protestants, as it has sometimes been represented.

Still, Trent was a 'one off' event and in a sense became the victim of its own success. The Roman Catholic Church did not hold another general council for over three centuries: Vatican I in 1869–70. Reformation and Counter-Reformation continued to dominate Christian life and thought in Western Christendom and Trent seemed to have covered the relevant issues so successfully, in the eyes of most Roman Catholics, that another general council seemed superfluous. As mentioned earlier, local councils were held after Trent but largely to enforce its decisions; there was something of a renewed independence of such councils in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but they came to be seen as a challenge to Rome and once again conciliarism fell under the shadow of unorthodoxy or at least of disloyalty to Rome. The revival of the papacy in the nineteenth century, culminating in the definition of papal infallibility at the first Vatican Council in 1870, more or less completed this process: though it is ironic that this strongest statement of papal authority required a council for its proclamation.

Picking up the Pieces?

I stand by the remark at the beginning of this essay, that the relative decline of councils in the Church's second millennium has been one of the gravest wounds in the history of Christianity. It has entailed a great weakening in efficacy: in terms of understanding, of practising, and of proclaiming the Christian faith. At the same time, there is no point in harping in bitterness over the loss. There have been many other grievous wounds and losses in Christian history, a number of which are indeed connected with the decline of councils. We may think of the decline of Christianity in North Africa and in western Asia beginning in the seventh century, largely through the conquests of Muslim Arabs. However ecumenical we may feel towards Islam, and recognise the benefits that this great faith has brought, we may still feel these losses for Christianity. These areas had been great centres of energy for early Christianity and they had produced many of the leading personalities at the early councils of the Church. Yet much of this came to an end with the Muslim conquests.

Christians should be realistic, I think, in both recognising and grieving over the wounds and losses of their past. They should not pretend that they

have not happened or that, in some simplistic way, they are all part of divine Providence.

At the same time, I have tried to show the reasons for the decline of councils. In part it set in because some other good was being pursued. In the case of the East–West schism this is hard to propose. But the Gregorian Reform undoubtedly achieved many good things, even though councils were a casualty. The same goes for the Counter-Reformation. In the latter cases we must recognise both the gains and the losses and also that, in the particular historical circumstances in question, the two may have been inseparably linked.

A final very important point is that Christians are always invited to return to their roots, in tradition as well as in Scripture. Elements of tradition that were once important can be revisited and reinvigorated. Christian tradition is not like a long straight road, where the only position that we could be is where we actually are now, and, where the future is an indefinite and rather boring extension of the present. There is of course a framework and legitimate developments in the future are not arbitrary: they must be in harmony with the present and what has gone before. Nevertheless there is considerable space within this framework. Aspects of Christian tradition that have received exaggerated emphasis can be played down; others that have been underplayed or forgotten can be retrieved. This in fact has always been happening in the history of the Church. Christian tradition is a treasure to which we can always return and draw from according to our needs and those of the Church. The Holy Spirit is a God of surprises and also a God of balance: the people of God are filled with this balance and good sense.

In this way Christians can visit the more active conciliar traditions of the early Church with confidence, they can adapt and improve on them in the light of the needs of today and tomorrow.

Collegiality at Vatican II and After

A huge amount of time at Vatican II was devoted to the subject of 'collegiality'. Indeed, probably more time and discussion was given to it than to any other key concept. It was the single most discussed topic in the long debates on *Lumen Gentium*, the decree on the Church, which was, in the eyes of many, the council's most important achievement.

Thanks to the new five-volume history of Vatican II, edited by Professor Alberigo and others, we can trace the story through the entries under 'Collegiality' in the Subject indexes of the volumes.[1]

Preparatory Period

Collegiality was not a word that featured much in the preparation of Vatican II. Writing in 1960, shortly after Pope John XXIII announced the forthcoming council, Oscar Karrer, a Catholic priest from Switzerland who specialised in ecumenism, urged that episcopal collegiality be one of the corner-stones upon which the renewal of the Church, hoped from the council, should be based. Cardinal Alfrink, Archbishop of Utrecht in the Netherlands, asked, in his *votum* on what he hoped from the council,[2] for more theological reflection on the episcopate, leading to a consideration of collegiality. On the eve of the council, two major newspapers carried articles urging the council to discuss collegiality: *Frankfurter Allgemeiner Zeitung* on 17 September and *Le Monde* on 26 September 1962. But these voices calling for a discussion of collegiality seem to have been exceptional.[3]

It was widely accepted, of course, that the role of bishops would feature prominently at the council. Indeed, the Secretary of State, Cardinal Tardini, who was responsible for summarising the *vota* submitted by the bishops and others in preparation for the council, concluded that there was almost complete unanimity in calling for 'full restoration of the authority and

power of bishops in their own dioceses'.[4] The first Vatican Council, a century earlier, had originally intended to promulgate a complete document on the Church: including, therefore, the role of bishops. But the impending Franco–Prussian war, and the encirclement of Rome by the Italian army seeking the reunification of Italy and the end of the Papal States, meant the council's continuance was threatened. As a result, the intended full decree on the Church was curtailed, only the section of it pertaining to the papacy was discussed, and the decree eventually promulgated focused principally on papal infallibility. There was, therefore, a general expectation that Vatican II would complete the unfinished work of Vatican I and give attention to the theology of the episcopate. But this expectation did not extend to the specific issue or vocabulary of collegiality.

It is also true that the years preceding Vatican II had witnessed the growth of various aspects of the exercise of what later came to be called collegiality, but here too the vocabulary of collegiality was missing and in some cases, anyway, the evidence was conflicting. Thus, Pope Pius XII initiated plans for a new council to complete the work of Vatican I around 1949 but nothing came of these plans. There was quite extensive consultation of bishops before the same pope defined Mary's Assumption in 1950, but for the most part they were consulted individually rather than collectively or collegially. The attitude of the papacy towards episcopal conferences seems to have varied. Pius X was cautious if not hostile towards them. In mission lands, while Rome generally encouraged regional councils, it often became suspicious of them when they grew up and started to show independence, as in the USA.[5] In Italy, the Episcopal Conference started as late as 1954 and included only the presidents of the regional conferences, not all the bishops of the country. In France, many bishops, including senior figures such as cardinals Feltin, Gerlier and Liénart, felt ignored by Rome's unilateral handling and censuring of the worker-priest movement.[6] By the late 1950s, however, episcopal conferences were springing up in many countries and Pope Pius XII generally encouraged them. Thus in 1959, *Annuario Pontificio*, the official Vatican gazette, listed some 40 such episcopal conferences around the world, most of recent foundation.[7]

First Session: The Experience of Collegiality

Once the council had begun, the decisive factor in the development of collegiality, in the minds of many, at least according to their later reflections, was the 'experience' of it in the first session in the autumn of 1962. Important was

the first working day of the council, Saturday 13 October, when the elections to the ten 'conciliar commissions' that would be responsible for revising the decrees, in the light of the debates, were due to take place. Quick votes on that day would have favoured the candidates proposed by the Roman Curia. Indeed, Cardinal Ottaviani, who as Secretary of the Holy Office was the working head of the main doctrinal Congregation of the Roman Curia,[8] had drawn up and distributed to the council fathers lists of those he considered suitable candidates for the commissions. However, after a brief confrontation with some of the authorities of the council, a majority of the members succeeded in getting a postponement of the vote for three days, during which time they were able to become better acquainted with each other and as a result proceeded to elect a more representative cross-section of bishops and theologians to the commissions. Yves Congar, writing in his Journal, saw this day as crucial. Bernardin Gantin, then Archbishop of Cotonou in Benin and later cardinal, reflecting in an interview he gave some 30 years later, described the same 13 October as the day when the 'carried' became the 'carriers' and he reckoned the confrontation 'opened the way to the spirit of collegiality'.[9]

The spirit of collegiality unfolded further as the 70, mainly short, decrees that had been drafted by the preparatory commissions before the council came to be rejected and the council had to start more or less afresh in composing and debating the 16 longer decrees that eventually emerged. Accompanying this development was the activity of episcopal conferences within the council. In many cases the bishops of a given country met regularly as a group to discuss the course of events and the meetings were usually attended, and frequently addressed, by *periti*.[10] In this way collegiality extended beyond the episcopate to theologians, as Congar noted. Following the confrontation over the elections to the conciliar commissions, just mentioned, episcopal conferences were active in drawing up lists of their suggested candidates for these commissions. The presidents of many episcopal conferences or groups of conferences, or their elected representatives, met as a group, which, especially from the third session onwards, became influential in the direction of the council.[11] Representatives of the Oriental Catholic churches also met on a regular basis, though differences among these churches often made cooperation difficult.[12]

The attitude of the so-called conservatives, including many figures in the Roman Curia, towards this development of episcopal awareness varied between caution and hostility. The episcopal conference of the USA dated back, under various names, to 1919. The 246 bishops of the conference

planned to hold their annual meeting at the North American College in Rome on the opening day of the council. They were, however, informed by Cardinal Cicognani, who had been Apostolic Delegate in the USA for 20 years and succeeded Cardinal Tardini as Secretary of State shortly before the start of the council, that the meeting was permitted but by way of exception and on condition that no *communiqués* were issued to the Catholic or secular press and that the bishops did not speak about their discussions with bishops of other countries. This was surely an attempt to control emerging collegiality! Cardinal Larraona, Prefect of the Congregation of Rites in the Roman Curia and President of the conciliar commission on the Liturgy, spoke of the dangers of episcopal conferences when he addressed the Spanish bishops in late October.[13]

It was not until towards the end of the council's first session, on 23 November 1962, that copies of the draft decree on the Church that had been prepared by the relevant preparatory commission were distributed to members of the council. Collegiality appeared in the document but in a very restricted way, confined largely to times when an ecumenical council was in session. Around the same time other, unofficial draft decrees were distributed. The most important of these and the one that became the basis of the decree eventually approved, *Lumen Gentium*, was that composed under the direction of Monsignor Gérard Philips, the influential Belgian theologian. This 'Philips *schema*' allowed collegiality to appear more strongly and explicitly. It sought to connect the episcopate with the institution of the 12 apostles 'as a college' and argued that this 'college under Peter' continues today in the bishops and pope. Debate in the *aula* on the draft decree finally began on 1 December but there was little time to develop further the theme of collegiality before the first session of the council ended a week later.[14]

Second Session and Following Intersession

During the first intersession, that is, from December 1962 to the start of the council's second session in September 1963, it became likely that collegiality would be a central issue when the debate resumed. This duly happened when, from 4 to 16 October, the debate on the revised schema on the Church focused on that part of it dealing with the hierarchical constitution of the Church. Indeed, the issue of collegiality dominated the debates during this fortnight when the council met on nine days and was subject to 119 speeches and, in addition, 56 written texts were submitted for consideration.[15] It

continued at the forefront of discussion throughout the rest of the second session of the council as the decree on Bishops and their Dioceses, and other texts, came to be debated.[16]

The basic faultline in the debate followed the divide that emerged more generally in the council between the so-called conservative or traditionalist minority and the liberal or progressive majority. There is no doubt, to my mind, about the fundamental divide but the labels 'conservative', 'traditionalist', 'liberal' and 'progressive' may seem inappropriate and were indeed disputed and even disowned at the time. Thus, liberals could claim to be the true conservatives, arguing that the so-called conservatives or traditionalists were rather 'moderns' living in a relatively recent time-warp, dating from the nineteenth century and the dominance of ultramontanism in the Church. For their part, conservatives could claim that it was they who were bringing true freedom and progress to the Church, in contrast to the enslavement to the world that resulted from liberalism. To avoid these labels, while recognising the divide, for the sake of convenience and at the cost of a certain oversimplification, I shall henceforth usually call members of the 'conservative' minority 'A's and those of the 'progressive' minority 'B's.

To oversimplify, then, 'A's were either hostile or very cautious towards collegiality, 'B's were largely in favour. A fundamental issue was that for 'A's collegiality seemed to threaten papal primacy and, by implication, the Roman Curia, which was seen as an extension of the papacy; whereas 'B's emphasised the role and authority of bishops in their own right and their responsibility to act collectively.

Within these basic categories there were many nuances. There was the divide between those who were opposed outright to the inclusion of collegiality in the text and those who accepted it. Views among the latter varied from reluctant acceptance to positive support: from an insistence that the college of bishops was firmly subject to the pope, and the pope also enjoyed a role independent of the college, to support for the college of bishops in its own right and to a desire to extend collegiality beyond the episcopate to the presbyterate and other members of the Church. There was also unease about emphasising collegiality when the word was not to be found in Scripture and had not featured prominently in the tradition of the Church. In addition, there was the tension centering on the experience of collegiality at the council. That is to say, the debate on the principle of collegiality became inextricably linked with how the bishops were actually behaving in the council, including their attitude towards the pope – Paul VI had succeeded John XXIII in the summer preceding the second session – and the Roman Curia.

On the one hand, for example, Cardinal Siri, archbishop of Genoa in Italy and a leader of the conservative party at the council, in his speech to the council on 7 October, accepted episcopal collegiality but not in any sense that diminished papal authority. For him the relationship was non-reciprocal: the pope exists without the college of bishops, while the college exists only with the pope and because of papal mandate. Earlier in the year, in an interview published in the 30 March issue of *America*, the magazine of the North American Jesuits, Siri had argued in a similar way in calling for an end to the ambiguities surrounding collegiality. 'The pope', he said, 'is vicar of Christ on earth, and he would be this even if there were no episcopal college'. Later, it seems, he hoped for the abandonment altogether of references to collegiality in the decree on the Church.[17]

Others of the 'A' party spoke or wrote in a similar vein. Cardinal Ottaviani of the Holy Office warned that collegiality of bishops could not be derived from Scripture and might lead to a lessening of papal authority. Cardinal Michael Browne, also of the Holy Office and formerly Master-General of the Dominican order, likewise expressed his fear that collegiality diminished papal primacy and urged the council 'to be on guard' against it. Fr Fernandez, the present Master-General of the Dominicans, in a meeting of the Doctrinal Commission at the time of the debate in the *aula*, warned against an 'exaggerated democratism'. Earlier, Cardinal Cicognani, Secretary of State, had warned against 'the dangers of episcopalism'. Del Pinto Gomez, bishop of Lerida in Spain, argued that collegiality has no scriptural basis: Cardinal MacIntyre, archbishop of Los Angeles, urged that episcopal conferences be given no more than a consultative role. Marcel Lefebvre, formerly archbishop of Dakar in Senegal and currently Superior-general of the Holy Spirit congregation, who was later to form his own 'Lefebvrist' church, accepted a certain moral collegiality but argued that it led only to moral relations among bishops, not to juridical ties. Carli, bishop of Segni, rejected the idea that collegiality was of divine right and many other Italian bishops, it appears, were hostile to the doctrine: Archbishop Staffa, Secretary of the Congregation for Seminaries and Universities, another prominent opponent of collegiality, spelled out his objections in an article in the newspaper *Il Quotidiano* of 29 October, the day before crucial votes were to be taken on the matter by the council and so perhaps hoping to influence the votes. Several of the above prelates were members or sympathisers of *Coetus Internationalis Patrum*, the somewhat shadowy grouping of hardline 'A's, and it was this *Coetus* that provided the strongest and most theologically articulate opposition to what they regarded as the new and heterodox doctrine of collegiality.[18]

Among the 'B' majority, the Dutch episcopate, led by Van Dodewaard of Haarlem, argued strongly that the power of the college of bishops could not be delegated. It is of divine right, they said, and should be defined as such. Bettazzi, auxiliary bishop of Bologna, claimed that collegiality was no new doctrine and cited various Roman theologians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who favoured it; also Kleutgen, the Jesuit theologian and principal architect of Vatican I's decree on the papal authority and infallibility, who was quoted as saying that 'it is certain bishops share in the government and instruction of the universal church'.[19] The impression is that the 'B' majority instinctively supported collegiality without being able to justify it well.

Among those who did not fit easily into the 'A' or 'B' categories, Hubert Jedin, the Church historian and *peritus* at the council, was worried, according to his *Lebensbericht*, that collegiality was a 'new and strange term'. Cardinal Tisserant, dean of the College of Cardinals and one of the ten Presidents of the council, a kind of elder statesman, seems to have been happy with the treatment of the episcopate that was emerging during the second session but nevertheless disliked the term 'college of bishops'. Carlo Colombo, the theological adviser and confidant of Pope Paul VI, later bishop of Vittoriana, accepted collegiality but was against conceiving it in strictly juridical terms derived from secular positive law and against any possible setting of the college in opposition to the pope. Archbishop Parente, who held the senior post of Assessor at the Holy Office and in many respects fell into the 'A' camp, nevertheless found no difficulty with the term 'collegiality' and indeed favoured it. Mgr Gérard Philips, who, as mentioned, was the principal author of the revised decree on the Church that brought collegiality to the forefront of the debate, nevertheless had reservations about its use. He was happy to speak of Peter and the apostles as a college but not in a 'juridical sense'.[20]

The debate on collegiality in the council's second session came to a head in two of the five 'unofficial' votes that were taken on 30 October. In the first, the members of the council voted by 1,808 to 336 that the college of bishops is in succession to the apostolic college; and in the second, by an only slightly smaller margin – 1,717 to 408 – that the college of bishops is of divine right. Some saw this new word 'collegiality', discovered by the council, expressing a fundamental dimension of the Church's experience, and of the road travelled by the council so far, as almost the key to the whole council. Yves Congar put its discovery on the same level as those of the great councils of the past, of 'Theotokos' by the Council of Ephesus in 431 or transubstantiation by the councils of Lateran IV in 1215 and Trent in the sixteenth century. For some,

indeed, 'collegiality' became almost synonymous with Vatican II, so that any challenge to it seemed like an attempt to boycott the council itself.[21]

The two votes of 30 October were decisive in sealing the inclusion of collegiality in the decree on the Church; though differences, sometimes sharp, remained as to how it should be interpreted.[22] Only a few extremists, such as Staffa and Carli, continued openly to oppose the term altogether.[23] The differences of interpretation rumbled on into the second intersession, the months between the end of the second session in December 1963 and the beginning of the third session in September of the following year. Pope Paul VI, in his address on Holy Thursday 1964, said he was happy with the doctrine of collegiality and regarded its proper definition as a prime work of the council. Earlier, on hearing the results of the votes on 30 October 1963 in favour of collegiality, he had told the four Moderators of the council (cardinals Agagianian, Döpfner, Lercaro and Suenens, who were responsible for the day-to-day direction of the council), 'We have won!', thus expressing his support for the doctrine with remarkable directness. However, Pope Paul's address on Holy Thursday 1964 suggested that the 'proper definition' of collegiality still needed to be worked out and shortly afterwards he wrote a letter to the Secretary-general of the council, Archbishop Felici, in which he listed 13 suggested improvements touching on collegiality for consideration in the revision of the decree.[24]

Third and Fourth Sessions

The interpretation of collegiality came to the fore again in the council's third session, from mid-September to late November 1964, when debate resumed on the revised decree on the Church. The issues remained much the same as those discussed at the second session and there was plenty of repetition.[25] The decree, or more precisely Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, was finally approved on the last day of the third session, 21 November 1964, by the overwhelming majority of 2,151 to five.[26] Collegiality was treated at some length in its third chapter, entitled 'The hierarchical constitution of the Church and in particular the episcopate'.

A final dramatic development at the end of the third session centred on *Nota explicativa praevia*. This brief 'note' sought to clarify the position of the papacy in relation to episcopal collegiality. Its source remains obscure but it certainly derived from concerns within the 'A' group that the decree on the Church as it stood did not sufficiently guarantee papal prerogatives. *Nota explicativa praevia* means 'Prior explanatory note' – a kind of explanatory

preface – and the theory was, at least in the minds of its supporters, that the whole decree had to be read through the lens of the note. Its precise authority remains debated. It was announced to the surprised bishops by the Secretary-General of the council, Archbishop Felici, shortly before the final voting on the decree as a whole, and he said simply that the note had been ordered 'by higher authority'. This higher authority could only mean Pope Paul VI, yet the pope never explicitly gave his name or authority to the document. It was never voted upon by the council fathers nor, in the eyes of many, does it, strictly speaking, form part of *Lumen Gentium*. Its authority remains almost hanging in the air, without an official explanation of 'higher authority' or whether it should be seen as a document of the council or rather of the pope outside and/or above it.[27]

News of the *Nota* caused considerable dismay in the council and exacerbated other tensions that accumulated in the last week of the third session, which has come to be called in some circles *Settimana nera* (Black week). Pope Paul appears to have remained relatively unperturbed, insofar as it is possible to read his mind at this juncture. He seems to have regarded the *Nota* as, strictly speaking, unnecessary inasmuch as it added nothing to the decree it was qualifying, *Lumen Gentium*, nor subtracted anything from it. The *Nota* was necessary or advisable, therefore, only inasmuch as it prevented possible open dissent on the part of at least some members of the 'A' group and thereby preserved the important conciliar principle of unanimity. This view might seem justified by the overwhelming nature of the final vote approving the decree.[28] The successful conclusion of the council at its fourth session in the autumn of 1965 also put the earlier tensions over collegiality into better perspective.

After the Council

You may be forgiven for feeling a certain weariness after this long and detailed discussion of this elusive concept known as 'collegiality'. This essay has been a rather unhistorical attempt at the impossible, trying to define the precise relationship between pope and bishops. Tedious though some of the details may appear, they are necessary to enable us to properly appreciate the broader historical perspective within which collegiality must be situated.

The detailed discussion of collegiality at Vatican II has been important for a second reason: that is, because so much of the development of collegiality after Vatican II finds its reference and point of departure in the debates and decisions of the council. Indeed, at the theoretical level – the level of

ecclesiology – the debate has hardly progressed beyond the points raised some 50 years ago at the council.

The most direct attempt at the institutional level to put collegiality into practice has been the synod of bishops (episcopal synod). Established by Pope Paul VI in the aftermath of the council, the first synod was held in 1968 and they continued thereafter at three-yearly, and more recently two-yearly, intervals ever since. They are limited to an advisory and consultative role, to advise the pope on issues on which he wishes to be consulted. Though they are like ecumenical/general councils in that both are representative of the whole Catholic Church, albeit in differing degrees (all bishops attend an ecumenical/general council whereas synods are limited to a small number of bishops from each country or region), the synod of bishops is quite distinct from an ecumenical/general council inasmuch as the latter has legislative and executive authority and is thus not merely advisory and consultative. This distinction between advisory 'synods' and executive ecumenical 'councils' was formally enshrined in canons 342 to 348 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law.

The success of the synods of bishops is disputed. On the one hand, they have enabled the pope to receive advice from bishops around the world on matters of concern to him. On the other hand, the agenda, the membership and even the final reports of the synods have been much more tightly controlled by Rome than many would wish. The main theme of each synod and the detailed agenda of the meeting, which normally lasts a fortnight, have been determined by the pope and his officials, mostly members of the Roman Curia. The latter, moreover, have considerable say as to which bishops should attend the synod and who should speak at the meetings. And because the main purpose of the synod is to inform the pope, official reports to the public of what was said and done at the meetings are often very limited. Some regret, moreover, that the synods are always held in Rome. Many feel that when the topic of the synod is Africa or Asia, the meeting should be held in a country of the continent that is being discussed. Altogether, many feel that though the synods have been of some significance, their fruits have been disappointing. What is certain is that while their establishment was a direct result of the collegiality recommended by Vatican II, many of the ambiguities and tensions of the council's treatment of the topic have nevertheless remained.

The often fraught development of episcopal conferences since Vatican II may also be seen as closely linked to the council's discussion of collegiality. These conferences, usually representing the bishops of a region or a country or a group of countries, were growing in number and self-consciousness in the years immediately before Vatican II and they played an important role in

the council itself, as mentioned earlier. Many saw their further development as a natural response to the council's encouragement of collegiality. The meetings of the Dutch bishops in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and those of the bishops of Latin America (Consejo Episcopal Latino-Americano = CELAM), notably at Medellín in Colombia in 1968 and Puebla los Angeles in Mexico in 1979, caught public attention. Quickly, however, they ran into trouble with various circles in Rome, which regarded them as pushing the reforms of Vatican II too far, of misinterpreting them in an overly liberal (Dutch bishops) or even Marxist (CELAM) direction. Medellín and Puebla were, in the eyes of many, closely linked to the development of 'Liberation Theology' in Latin America, which was censured and partly condemned by Rome in a series of documents and statements, principally those of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF). As a result, further large-scale gatherings, especially those that went beyond the episcopate to include theologians and laity, were discouraged.[29] The strongest attempt to extend collegiality beyond the episcopate to the laity occurred in the Netherlands, where a series of large and apparently successful National Pastoral Councils took place in the late 1960s. These, too, were censured by Rome as was the Dutch Catechism (first published as *De Nieuwe Catechismus* in 1965 and soon after in English and other languages), which were seen by some as the inevitable bad fruits of collegiality. Regarding the USA, there has been tension between its large and influential Conference of Bishops and Rome.

Cardinal Ratzinger, who has been Prefect of CDF since 1981, has claimed that episcopal conferences have no 'theological status' and seems to fear their development as establishing a possible fence between Rome and individual bishops. In some cases he has insisted that decisions of episcopal conferences have force only if all the bishops vote in favour, on the grounds that authority belongs to each bishop and not collectively to the conference. Notwithstanding this caution and sometimes even apparent hostility, we can see that episcopal conferences are an established feature of the Catholic Church in most countries and that this development can only be understood in terms of Vatican II's treatment of collegiality. What the future holds remains to be seen, but it seems inconceivable that episcopal conferences will disappear.

Conclusions for the Future

Collegiality can mean many things. At a congress in March 2003 at the Lateran University in Rome, to commemorate John Paul II's 25 years as pope,

Cardinal Re, Prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for Bishops, spoke on collegiality, a topic on which he is surely an insider. He argued that John Paul II had promoted more effective co-participation of bishops in the governance of the Church through the Synod of Bishops and through his 'familiar, casual style,' as, for example, when he invited bishops on their *ad limina* visits to Rome to join him for working lunches, breaking the tradition that popes eat alone. He also cited the participation of bishops in reviewing the 1983 Code of canon law and the 1992 Catechism of the Catholic Church. He concluded that there 'is no conflict between Rome and the bishops over collegiality'.[30]

Cardinal Re's somewhat informal approach to collegiality has its attractions, even if his conclusion may seem too optimistic. It frees the debate from an over-juridical approach or any attempt to define very precisely the relationship between papacy and episcopate. This attempt may lie at the heart of the problem. In the course of history Christians have expressed in various ways the relationship between members of the Church. In the later Middle Ages the issues came to a head in the conciliar movement – at the councils of Constance and Basel – as we saw in the previous essay. But the relationship between pope and general council, which lay at the heart of the clash, was always seen in the broader context of relations among all members of the Church. Medieval Christians liked to speak of the Church as a body (Latin, *corpus*) or corporation, in which all the members – all Christians – had their assured and important places. This approach was later developed into the doctrine of the Church as the mystical body of Christ, resulting in the encyclical issued by Pope Pius XII in 1943, *Mystici Corporis.*

Collegiality may be seen as one of the most important issues discussed at Vatican II and the results have been widespread and fruitful for the Church subsequently. Even so, as with every development in the Church's teaching, it is important to place the insights within their historical context. Above all, it seems to me, it is essential to remember that the relationship between pope and bishops can never be defined precisely; and secondly that this relationship must always be seen in the wider context of the whole Christian people: as indeed Vatican II itself indicated, in the decree on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, by placing the chapter on 'The people of God' before that on 'The hierarchical constitution of the Church and in particular the episcopate'. Without these two cautions, it seems to me, we may be trapped in the web of an insoluble and somewhat artificial problem. If they are borne in mind, however, the Church can journey into the future enriched by one of the keenest of recent debates.

Ecumenism, Inter-Religious Dialogue and the Future: Part 1

This essay, and the following one,[1] presents some thoughts on councils and collegiality in relation to two pressing issues for Christianity today: first, ecumenism among Christian churches and second, dialogue between Christians and peoples of other faiths. It also includes some speculation on the future.

The thoughts take the form of nine reflections that are both independent and linked. To some extent these reflections return to or develop points that have been touched on already in the essays above, and to some extent they form a conclusion to these essays. The nine reflections are as follows:

1. Imperfect Union as the Norm and an Ideal

Divisions in the Church, or at least differences, have always been the norm. The councils show this clearly. Any notion that the Church has ever been fully united, except perhaps for an hour after Pentecost, is a dangerous myth. The point is very important not only in our acceptance of the Catholic Church itself but also for understanding relations among the various Christian churches and communities: past, present and future.

Sometimes the first seven ecumenical councils – Nicaea I in 325, Constantinople I in 381, Ephesus in 431, Chalcedon in 451, Constantinople II in 553, Constantinople III in 680–81, and Nicaea II in 787 – are called the seven councils of the undivided Church inasmuch as they took place before the most fundamental of all schisms in the Christian community, that between the churches of East and West beginning in the eleventh century. Yet there were major splits and schisms during this time: Arius and his sympathisers rejected Nicaea I, churches influenced by Nestorius broke away after Ephesus, various communities influenced by monophysite

Christology separated after Chalcedon, and many other smaller divisions occurred.

Even within the churches that remained in fundamental communion during this first millennium, there were tensions and schisms: periods of formal schism between the Eastern and Western churches, notably while Acacius (471–89) and Photius (858–92) were patriarchs of Constantinople; the persistence of Arianism within the Western church until the ninth century; and many other difficulties. Indeed, especially in proportion to the numbers of Christians – certainly under 100 million at any given time during the first millennium, over a billion today – the Church appears at least as quarrelsome during its first millennium as during the second. For strong language it is hard to rival the exchanges between theologians of Alexandria and of Antioch around the time of the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, notably the correspondence between Nestorius and Cyril of Alexandria, or that in Photius's encyclical letter of 867 denouncing the bishop of Rome and portraying Westerners as 'savage beasts'.[2]

This permanent tension within the Christian people even in the first millennium CE, as well as the exacerbations following the sad schisms of East and West in the eleventh century and the Protestant reformations in the sixteenth, force us to reflect on what kind of unity we should be seeking today. We have Christ's prayer that his followers may be one as he and the Father are one (John 17.11 and 20–23) and we must strive for the fulfilment of this prayer. On the other hand, we should not assume too quickly that we know what this desired union represents in this life. The New Testament, with its pluralism of approaches, suggests a certain diversity, rather than tight uniformity, as the ideal. We should not be so obsessed with the goal of full organic unity that we live in permanent discouragement or become forgetful of intermediate steps and medium-term opportunities. Full organic unity is most unlikely ever to arrive in this life. Partial or imperfect union, on the other hand, has been the norm throughout the Church's history and in many ways has proved healthy: through debates and struggles, within a common Christian framework, growth and development in the Church have been possible. In this sense it is an ideal as well as the norm.

2. Amazing Nature of Existing Unity

While we work to heal existing divisions, we should ponder the amazing nature of the unity that has endured: unity both within the Catholic Church and among the churches and bodies that make up the whole Christian

community. It is amazing on account of both the greatness of the mystery and the frailty of us carriers of it. Our human limitations need no elaboration but we need to remind ourselves continually of the wonder and depth of the Christian mystery, revealed most sublimely in the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. We may ask why more people do not become Christians and why Christians cannot remain more united, yet the mystery of Christianity is so deep that the miracles are that anyone believes and that Christians have remained as united as they have! This can be said without any glossing over the divisions and differences that remain among Christians, for what unites them is more significant than what divides, as Vatican II's decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio*, no. 3, indicated:

> In spite of these obstacles, it remains true that all who have been justified by faith in baptism are members of Christ's body and have a right to be called Christians. They are, therefore, deservedly recognised as brothers and sisters in the Lord by the children of the Catholic Church.

> Moreover, some, even most, of the significant elements and endowments that together go to build up and give life to the Church itself can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church: the written word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit; and visible elements too. All of these, coming from Christ and leading back to Christ, properly belong to the one Church of Christ.

Other world religions, with perhaps simpler and less demanding claims, find it hard enough to remain united; indeed may be more divided than Christianity. As long as Christianity retains its very exalted claims and challenges, unity among Christians will always remain a miracle of grace and of the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, we need to rely more upon the Holy Spirit in our ecumenical endeavours. Perhaps we see restored unity too much in terms of our own efforts and strategies, putting broken pieces back together again through our own ingenuity. We may think too much of human solutions. It is the Holy Spirit who has preserved unity in the Church in the past – against all the odds, against all human expectations, one may say, in view of the depth of the mystery and the extent of our human frailty – so we trust She will find ways forward in the future: ways and at times that the Spirit wills.

The ecumenical councils are perhaps the most striking example of this supernatural action. In them we see, *par excellence*, the Holy Spirit guiding the Church and preserving as much unity as was possible. Our role, then, is to listen to the Spirit and to cooperate with her promptings rather than to rely too much upon our own plans.

3. Our Remarkable Conciliar Tradition

As well as the remarkable nature of existing unity among Christians, our conciliar tradition deserves attention. I touched on this point in the first two essays of this booklet, regarding both ecumenical and regional councils in the first millennium CE. We can now extend these comments up to the beginning of the third millennium.

The 21 ecumenical and general councils, from Nicaea I in 325 to Vatican II in 1962–65, form the most notable series of assemblies in the history of the world. No other institution or body has a comparable record. As mentioned previously, in comparison with the British Parliament or the Althing of Iceland, probably the oldest national assemblies with an institutional continuity in the Western world, the councils of the Church yield a much longer history: the earliest Parliament is usually dated to 1257 and the first Althing to 930, whereas Nicaea goes back to 325. In size and organisation, too, they were very remarkable: some 250–300 bishops assembled at Nicaea I, 500–600 at Chalcedon in 451; large councils were held in the medieval West from Lateran III to Basel-Florence. Trent held together for 18 years amidst many difficulties; some 2,400 bishops from all over the world participated in Vatican II at any given time – as well as accompanying theologians, journalists, observers and others – and the work continued for four years.

No other religion, moreover, can show a more impressive record. Assemblies have, of course been part of the tradition of all of them and the pan-Buddhist gatherings in the early and recent years of this movement are notable examples.

Roman Catholics can be especially grateful for this conciliar tradition. Despite human failings and sinfulness, the Roman Catholic Church has preserved the mainstream of conciliar tradition after the sad schisms with the Eastern church in the eleventh century and with the churches of the Reformation in the sixteenth. It has remained the largest Christian church and in this and other ways has preserved the mainstream of Christianity; no other Christian church has a continuous conciliar tradition of comparable importance.

These councils are especially remarkable in view of the difficulty of their business. It is hard enough for a secular assembly to agree on concrete issues; far more difficult is it to reach agreement on the mysteries of religious faith, which transcend this world and touch the divine, or to update this faith into contemporary life and language. This is especially true for Christianity in view of the exalted nature of its claims. For a secular assembly, moreover, a majority vote is usually sufficient to pass a law, while unanimity, or virtual unanimity, has traditionally been required for doctrinal statements in ecumenical councils. Such consensus on such difficult matters is indeed another miracle of grace and of the Holy Spirit.

It is important for Christians to appreciate their conciliar tradition. The tradition has, unfortunately, as described in section 3 above, fallen under something of a cloud for Roman Catholics, beginning in the fifteenth century with the struggle for supremacy between the councils of Constance and Basel and a succession of popes, and continuing with the emphasis on the papacy in the Counter-Reformation and later periods. The whole tradition was compromised in the eyes of some Catholics, seen as a rival and threat to papal teaching and as a result was marginalised. This is foolish and unnecessary since in principle there should not be conflict between the two institutions, rather mutual corroboration. For other churches, moreover, the medieval and later general councils have usually been seen as irredeemably Roman Catholic and therefore are largely rejected. As a result, with a truncated conciliar history, interrupted after the second Council of Nicaea in 787, these churches have little interest in a living and continuous conciliar tradition. This is a pity and may be partly resolved by the more ecumenical and relaxed approach to the councils after Nicaea II that will be suggested in the sixth reflection, below.

It seems to me very important for both Catholics and members of other Christian churches to appreciate the remarkable nature of this conciliar tradition. The successes, together with the flaws and fragmentation, lead to both confidence and humility. The fact that these experiences – both sides of the coin, of consolation and desolation – belong to the whole Christian community, in differing degrees and modes, make this shared tradition a source of hope for ecumenical dialogue and activity among Christians in the future.

4. Asia's Role

The fourth topic of reflection is the contribution of Asia to the Church's conciliar tradition. The topic is important, I believe, not only for the Catholic

Church's understanding of itself but also for both ecumenical dialogue among the Christian churches and for inter-religious dialogue among the religions and faiths of our day.

I have produced a book in which I tried to develop more fully this theme of the Asian contribution to the councils of the Church. The book has a challenging title: *Is the Church too Asian? Reflections on the Ecumenical Councils.*[3] The starting point of my considerations was the criticism, often heard today, that the Church, especially the Catholic Church, is too Western. As a result, its theology and discipline are sometimes rejected by the churches of the emerging Christian world – in Africa, Asia and Latin America – as the outdated colonial impositions of a once dominant but now decadent church.

My suggestion was that during the time of the first seven ecumenical councils, from Nicaea I in 325 to Nicaea II in 787, the complaint would probably have been the opposite of that made today. That is, people may have complained, rather, that the Church was too Asian, too dominated by the thought and lifestyles of the East. Later, in the medieval and early modern eras, when the centre of the Church undoubtedly moved westwards, to Rome and Western Europe, the early Asian foundation nevertheless loomed much larger in the background than is generally recognised. Finally, at the second Vatican Council there was a more obvious resurgence of Asia's influence and this has continued to grow in the subsequent years of the council's reception.

Regarding the early ecumenical councils, to summarise the first chapter of this booklet, one notices first that all of them were held in the East, in modern Turkey. Four of them were held in Asia – Nicaea I and II, Ephesus and Chalcedon – and while Constantinople, the site of the other three, lies just within Europe, being on the western side of the Bosphorus Straits, the traditional dividing line between Asia and Europe, it was considered very much a city of the East, the capital of the eastern half of the Roman Empire. All seven of them, moreover, were summoned and presided over, either directly or through their officials, and their decrees promulgated, by the eastern emperor of the day or, in effect, in the cases of Chalcedon and Nicaea II, by the empresses Pulcheria and Irene.

In addition to the presiding emperor or empress or their officials, the large majority of participants at these councils were from the East. At Nicaea I only half a dozen participants, including the two papal legates, are known to have come from the Western church; all the other three hundred or so were bishops of sees in the Eastern Empire (including Egypt and the Greek-speaking eastern part of North Africa). At Constantinople I in 381 all were from the East. At the next five councils – Ephesus, Chalcedon, Constantinople II and

III, Nicaea II – the Western church was represented by papal legates and a few other bishops but again the overwhelming majority of members were from the East.

The language of the councils and their decrees was that of the Eastern Empire, Greek, and the preoccupations and initiatives were predominantly eastern. Arius, Nestorius and Eutyches, the main causes of the councils of Nicaea I, Ephesus and Chalcedon, all came from the East: the controversies about the Trinity and the divinity and humanity of Christ, which dominated the first six councils, as well as the issue of iconoclasm at Nicaea II, were largely debates within the Eastern church. The canons relating to Church order that were promulgated by these councils, notably those of Nicaea I in 325 and Trullo in 692 (if we may include the latter, according to the tradition of the Eastern church, as the 'Quinisext' council, the disciplinary conclusions to the fifth and sixth councils of Constantinople II and III), had mainly in mind the circumstances of the Eastern churches. The initiatives at these councils came principally from the sees of Alexandria, Antioch and Constantinople. As for the West the contribution of Ossius of Cordoba at Nicaea I is disputed: otherwise the major initiative from the Western church was the 'Tome' of Pope Leo at Chalcedon.

You will have noticed that I have been speaking more of the East than of Asia. Much of the Eastern empire, it is true, lay in Europe – principally Greece and the Balkans – and Africa rather than in Asia. All three continents, moreover, were known then as separate continents; they are not just modern constructs. On the other hand, the divide between the western half of the Roman empire, centred on Rome, and the eastern half, with its capital of Constantinople, following the linguistic boundaries of Latin and Greek, was more significant and fundamental than the divisions of the three continents. The Greek-speaking parts of the empire in Europe were closer to Asia than they were to Western Europe. Most of Turkey, the location of all seven councils and the region that played the most decisive role of all, lay within Asia: western Asia, it is true, very western from the point of view of India or China, really part of the Mediterranean world, but Asia nonetheless.

The delicate question of the allegiance of the eastern, Greek-speaking part of Europe, involves the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. Their enormous influence upon Christian theology – especially of Plato for the early councils – is not in doubt. What needs questioning is whether they should be identified with Western Europe as closely as they usually are. They, and ancient Greek thought more generally, it seems to me, have been hijacked into the European

chariot whereas in fact they belong as much if not more to Asia. Europe, notably Western Europe, has been desperate to find its intellectual roots and secular elements in particular, which dislike much emphasis upon Europe's Christian roots, have discovered them in classical Greek thought. However, this intellectual world was much more in touch with Asian and Egyptian thought and religion than with the intellectually undeveloped West: much closer, if you like, to Persia and the Indus Valley than to France, Germany or Britain. The surprise is that Asia has not challenged Europe's stake in the ancient Greek world more strongly, and laid greater claim to what belongs at least partly to it. Maybe Asia has so many cultural and intellectual roots that it feels less need to be possessive about its Greek roots? An overdue realigning of Greek thought in an Asian direction has found support from various recent scholars, notably M.L. West and W. Burkert.[4]

The relevant point, with regard to Christian ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue, is that the early ecumenical councils reveal the roots of the Roman Catholic Church as much more Asian, less Western and European, than is usually portrayed. The effects of this early base, moreover, have remained with Catholicism ever since. The Western Church in the Middle Ages, notably in its councils, remained in awe of its past, in thrall to its eastern and Asian roots: it was very reluctant to outgrow or move beyond them, especially in theological matters.[5] Later, the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century and Vatican I in the nineteenth witnessed, in various ways, a return to a more universal and catholic approach, a subconscious return to Asian roots, away from some of the Eurocentric features of the Protestant Reformation, the eighteenth century Enlightenment, and the scientific, social and political movements of nineteenth-century Europe.[6] As a result, Christians outside Europe of all denominations, as well as members of other world religions, whose origins and development lie largely in Asia, can see the Catholic Church as a friend and fellow-traveller, with many common roots, rather than as an alien body that needs to be rejected.

5. Africa's Contribution

This fifth reflection parallels closely the fourth. Just as the early Church was more Eastern and Asian than Western and European, so too it was more African than European, at least in terms of contributions to the ecumenical councils.[7]

Thus, at the first three ecumenical councils – Nicaea I in 325, Constantinople I in 381, and Ephesus in 431 – taken together, Africa played perhaps the most

important theological role of all the continents. This may be seen at Nicaea inasmuch as the council's principal work was to support the condemnation of Arius that had been issued a few years earlier by Bishop Alexander of Alexandria, in Egypt, and to issue a creed in line with the Alexandrian school of theology. Moreover, in the subsequent successful reception of Nicaea's teaching in both Africa and the wider Church, the key figure was Alexander's successor as bishop, Athanasius. Constantinople I, while it was predominantly a Council of the church of Constantinople, endorsed the creed of Nicaea and issued a revised and improved version of it – what is usually called the Nicene Creed – which has survived down to today as the most important creed for all the Christian churches, including the Catholic Church, and is a fundamental feature of the unity that already exists among Christians. At the Council of Ephesus, which approved Mary's title of Θεοτόκος (Mother of God) and thereby proved crucial in the development of the Church's teaching on the divinity of Christ, the dominant theologian and organiser of the controversial council was once again the bishop of Alexandria, Cyril.

After Ephesus, it is true, the influence of the North African church waned: at Chalcedon and Constantinople II; and then more obviously at Constantinople III in 680–81 and Nicaea II in 787, by which time Alexandria and North Africa had been taken by Islam and as a result the direct contribution of Africa to the councils was effectively brought to an end. Though indirectly, at these councils the African influence remained strong; that is, through the Church's continuing endorsement of the first three councils of Nicaea, Constantinople and Ephesus, which thus formed, together, an essential basis for the teaching of the subsequent councils.

In the Middle Ages and later, as the centre of Christianity moved to the West, the decline of Africa's influence was felt even more acutely than that of Asia inasmuch as Islam's eclipse of Christianity was even more complete in Africa than in Asia. Only in Ethiopia did Christianity survive in any fullness throughout the medieval period and even there it was largely cut off from the wider Church, surrounded as it was by Islamic and non-Christian peoples and countries.

Even so, Africa's influence remained powerfully in the background during the medieval and early modern periods, and resurfaced more openly at Vatican II and afterwards. In terms of councils, the immediate concern of these lectures, it showed itself in the continuing respect paid to the teaching of those first three ecumenical councils, Nicaea, Constantinople I and Ephesus, and their influence upon all subsequent councils.

There was, too, the wider contribution of the African church, which greatly affected the teaching of later councils, for the most part indirectly, as well as the later life of the Church more generally. We think of the great African theologians, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, Cyprian of Carthage, Tertullian, and Augustine of Hippo, to mention only the best known; Augustine has been the theologian, after New Testament times, who has had the greatest influence upon the Western church. From Africa, too, we think of the early pioneers of religious life, Paul of Thebes, Anthony and Pachomius; and the influence of many other Christians – including women such as the martyrs Perpetua and Felicity – in various areas of Church life. In all these ways the African church has exerted a powerful and abiding influence upon Christianity.

I speak as an outsider to the experiences of Africa, as of Asia, so it would be impertinent for me to pursue this reflection much further; though I take this opportunity of expressing the hope that scholars from Africa will do so. What seems certain to me is that with this glorious past and its lasting influence upon the Christian church, Christians in Africa today, while rightly seeking to liberate themselves from what is narrowly and one-sidedly Western or European, should be equally eager to recover their African roots in Christianity: otherwise they may be rejecting what may appear Western but is in fact properly their own heritage, which would be a disaster and contrary to all good manners of respect for ancestors.

Ecumenism, Inter-Religious Dialogue and the Future: Part 2

We come now to the last four reflections, numbers 6 to 9, on the theme 'Ecumenism, Inter-Religious Dialogue, and the Future'.

6. Formula *versus* Content?

The sixth reflection follows in the line of thought of the preceding two. To it is given the oblique title, 'Formula *versus* content?'

Accompanying the opposition to the Catholic Church and its theology as too Western and European has been the argument that the early councils imposed upon the universal Church a set of doctrinal formulas that were typically tight, analytic and abstract in the Western manner and have acted as a straightjacket upon Christianity ever since. It is a variation upon Adolph Harnack's lament of the evil effects of Hellenisation upon the Church. One reaction has been to reject outright these doctrinal formulas. A second and more subtle response has been to urge Christians to concentrate upon the general content of the creeds and other doctrinal statements of the early councils, where freedom may be found, without paying much attention to the precise formulas in which the doctrines were expressed. Is such a distinction between formula and content right?

I have already replied to one aspect of this question by suggesting that Greek thought was closer to Asia than to Western Europe. Now I would like to make a second point, that the doctrinal formulas of the councils are not tight and rigid; rather there is considerable space and flexibility within them. They are signposts pointing to spacious fields and high mountains, warning too of false trails, rather than policemen with batons herding people into confined pens. The content of thought, moreover, cannot be divorced from the way in which it is expressed – there is no thought without some

expression – and in this sense the content of faith cannot be divorced from its formulas. In view of the flexibility and elasticity within the doctrinal statements of the councils, it is much wiser, it seems to me, to accept and find space within these statements than sharply to contest or reject them.

Two considerations support this argument. First, the Greek language. One has only to look up in a dictionary three words that Christians eventually settled upon in expressing the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation to see how elastic these words are: οὐσία (ousia) for 'being' as in the one being of God, ὑπόστασις (hupostasis) for 'person' as in the three persons of the Trinity, and φύσις (phusis) for 'nature' as in the human and divine natures of Christ. The meanings of ὑπόστασις (hupostasis), according to Liddell & Scott's standard Greek-English dictionary, are as follows: standing under, supporting, sediment, jelly or thick soup, duration, coming into existence, origin, foundation, substructure, argument, confidence, courage, resolution, steadiness, promise, substantial nature, substantial existence, reality, wealth, property, and various others! A similarly broad range of meanings will be found under οὐσία (ousia) and φύσις (phusis). There is, too, much overlap in the meanings of the three words. To regard them as expressing rigidly defined concepts is manifestly wrong: there is plenty of space within them to accommodate most theological approaches.

Secondly, the principle of unanimity. Ecumenical councils are not like the Lok Sabha or the British Parliament, or most national assemblies, where a majority of one is sufficient to pass a law. In them, rather, unanimous consent, or virtual unanimity, has traditionally been required for approval. At Nicaea I all but two bishops eventually agreed to the creed and the principle of unanimity subsequently remained in force even if it often proved difficult to achieve. It continued as the norm during the medieval councils and was acknowledged as such at Trent, Vatican I and II. As a result, especially in doctrinal statements, formulas had to be found that were sufficiently elastic to accommodate the views or all, or almost all, sections of opinion. This was helped in the early councils by the fluidity of the Greek language, just mentioned. In the Nicene Creed, for example, the crucial word ὁμοούσιος (homoousios, of the same being), to express the Son's relationship with the Father, could be interpreted in various ways, within of course a common framework. Later, as a more specifically Christian vocabulary developed in Latin, the same point was met by finding elasticity in sentences, paragraphs or whole decrees rather than in single words. For example, the crucial penultimate paragraph of Vatican I's decree on papal infallibility, which defined this infallibility, contained various qualifications to appease those opposed to the

definition. Many of Vatican II's decrees may be described as patchwork quilts which try to accommodate most shades of opinion roughly in proportion to their strengths among the members of the council.

The implications for ecumenism are encouraging. Catholics can rest more secure with their traditional formulas and find within them plenty of room for present and future exploration. Other Christians generally share with Catholics the formulas of the first seven ecumenical councils: they may be surprised at how much common ground they can find in later councils. Adherents of other religions may find more points of contact with Christians than of difference.

7. Status of Councils after 1054

What is the status of the councils that have for long been recognised as ecumenical by the Roman Catholic Church and took place after the beginning of the schism between East and West in 1054? This question is of great significance for ecumenism since almost all the points in dispute between the Roman Catholic Church on the one hand, and the Orthodox Church and the churches of the Reformation on the other, depend on statements made by these later councils.

They are, obviously, not recognised as ecumenical by either the Orthodox Church or the churches of the Reformation. By the former because it was not represented in any proper sense at them; by the latter partly for the same reason of the absence of the Eastern church and partly because they consider the Church, at least the Western church and therefore its councils, as being in a state of radical error during the Middle Ages and the Roman Catholic Church as continuing in this state of error during the Counter-Reformation and afterwards.

What is the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church to the status of these later councils? The answer is not simple. Medieval people themselves in Western Christendom were uncertain about the status of their own councils and the weight of opinion seems to have been that they were not ecumenical. The point is made rather clearly by the profession of faith that the Council of Constance in 1417 required of a future pope. In listing the councils that the pope should respect, the profession drew a distinction between the eight 'universal/ecumenical' (Latin, *universalia*) councils from Nicaea I to Constantinople IV and the 'general' (Latin, *generalia*) councils (of the Middle Ages) 'at the Lateran, Lyons and Vienne'.[1] The distinction was not expanded upon but it is evident that some difference in status was intended. Other evidence showing

that most of the medieval councils were not then regarded as ecumenical has been summarised by Victor Peri and Luis Bermejo. In particular, the Council of Florence (1438–45), at which the Eastern church was represented and a form of reunion reached, was often referred to in the West, including by popes and their legates, as the eighth or ninth ecumenical council: that is, coming immediately after Nicaea II or Constantinople IV and excluding the earlier medieval councils. It was thought impossible to have an ecumenical council without the participation of the Eastern church, as was the case in the medieval councils before Florence.[2] The attempt to promote the medieval councils to ecumenical status came about during the Counter-Reformation. Roman Catholic apologists sought to defend the true Church as they saw it against the attacks of the Reformation by an appeal to its medieval heritage and the medieval councils formed an important part of this heritage. Cardinals Robert Bellarmine, the Jesuit theologian, and Cesare Baronius, the Oratorian scholar, were influential in this development and so too was the publication in four volumes in 1608–12 of the so-called 'Roman edition' of the councils.[3] This edition, compiled by scholars in Rome including Bellarmine and working under the auspices of Pope Paul V, sought to decide which councils were to be counted in the list of ecumenical councils.[4] In addition to the eight councils before the East–West schism, Nicaea I to Constantinople IV, it included the ten medieval councils, Lateran I in 1123 to Lateran V in 1512–17, and Trent. The list came to be widely accepted within the Roman Catholic Church though it was never defined in an authoritative way.

The issue was reopened in recent times. The year 1974 saw two important contributions. First, the influential Dominican theologian Yves Congar wrote a wide-ranging article on criteria for ecumenicity in councils, in which he questioned the list of 21 ecumenical councils (19 from Nicaea I to Trent plus Vatican I and II) that had become traditional within the Catholic Church.[5] Second, as part of the celebrations of the seventh centenary of the second Council of Lyons in 1274, Pope Paul VI wrote a letter to Cardinal Willebrands, president of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, in which he referred to Lyons II and the other medieval councils as 'general councils of the West' (*generales synodos in occidentali orbe*) rather than ecumenical councils: a choice of language that appears intentional.[6] Since 1974 there has been some discussion of the issue, though not as much as might be expected in view of its possible fruitfulness. There has been a general tendency even within the Roman Catholic communion to follow the lead of Paul VI and call the medieval councils 'general councils of the Western church' rather than cling to the ecumenical title for them. The Anglican–Roman Catholic International

Commission (ARCIC) touched briefly on the issue in its first 'Agreed Statement on Authority in the Church' (1976), no. 19, mentioning obliquely the distinction between ecumenical and general councils, but disappointingly it did not develop the argument.

The question of whether the ten medieval councils from Lateran I to Lateran V should be regarded as general councils of the Western church rather than ecumenical councils is undoubtedly very important. The same arguments apply, of course, to Trent, Vatican I and II: without the participation of the churches of the Reformation these later councils may better be described as general councils of the Roman Catholic Church rather than of the Western church. Even so, they are of great significance. The ten medieval councils were the most authoritative in Western Christendom and it was in the West that the large majority of Christians lived. There was still vitality in the Orthodox Church and it continued to hold major councils – for example the councils of Constantinople in 1341 and 1351, which endorsed Hesychasm, and the councils of Jassy in 1642 and Jerusalem in 1672, which taught concerning the eucharist and the nature of the Church – but with the advance of Islam it was for the most part, until recent times, a church on the defensive and developments were limited. Since the Reformation, moreover, the Roman Catholic Church has remained the largest church and may claim to represent the mainstream of Christianity. Another point is that there were major schisms before 1054, as we have seen,[7] so that it is false to contrast too sharply the unity of the church of the first millennium with the divisions of the second millennium and so to exaggerate the status of the early councils at the expense of the later ones.

Nevertheless, the more relaxed approach to the medieval and later councils in the West, encouraged at the highest level by Pope Paul VI, may form a key to ecumenical progress since it removes the need for Trent and Vatican I to be given an absolute status and thereby remaining a block to ecumenical dialogue. This approach also seems to find support from Cardinal Ratzinger, who stated that in any reunion with the eastern Orthodox churches nothing would be expected of them that went beyond the *status quo* at the time of the beginning of the East–West schism in the eleventh century.[8]

8. Preoccupation with the Papacy

Ecumenical councils are a good antidote to excessive preoccupation with the papacy. Pope Paul VI said on several occasions that the papacy is the greatest obstacle to reunion among Christians and John Paul II in his encyclical *Ut*

unum sint (1995) invited Christians to suggest ways for the papacy to become more acceptable and effective. The councils help on both scores. They show the strengths and limitations of the papacy and, perhaps of most importance, the wider context of Church order in which the papacy should be seen. They help us to avoid what might be called the 'Hebblethwaite syndrome'; yearning for the perfect pope and being almost permanently disappointed when he does not arrive.[9]

The councils teach us not to expect too much from the papacy. Pope Honorius I was condemned for monothelitism by three successive ecumenical councils, those of Constantinople III, Nicaea II and Constantinople IV.[10] The councils bear witness to the leading support given by popes over five centuries to forms of holy war: the crusade to recapture the Holy Land as well as crusades against heretics within Western Christendom.[11] They also bear witness to papal support for the Inquisition and its sometimes violent procedures.[12] Clearly the papacy is not preserved from all error, even from grave errors.

On the other hand, despite these lapses, we can be thankful for the Holy Spirit's continuing guidance of the See of Rome. In doctrinal matters, the condemnations of Pope Honorius and the relatively few other major mistakes of the popes, during the first millennium of the Church, contrast with the more numerous and serious errors of the bishops of the other patriarchal sees of Constantinople, Alexandria and Antioch. Indeed, caution was generally a mark of the papacy during this time: perhaps a lesson for the papacy today. It was not that the popes had a direct line to the Holy Spirit to call down the answers – they too had to struggle with the doctrinal and other issues of their day – yet it is remarkable how, in the end, they normally emerged from these complicated controversies on the right side. They were more like goalkeepers, or wicket-keepers (or even long-stops), if you will excuse a cricketing metaphor, preserving the Church in the last line of defence, rather than centre-forwards, fast bowlers or other front-line attackers.

These strengths and limitations provide, in themselves, a context for the papacy today: helping us and other Christians to appreciate this great institution and yet not to expect too much from it. The councils also set the papacy within the wider context of the Church. This is shown perhaps most clearly, paradoxically, in the decree that is sometimes seen as providing the greatest exaltation and isolation of the papacy, namely Vatican I's decree on papal infallibility. For, the decree does not say directly that the pope is infallible. It says, rather, that in certain solemn situations the pope 'possesses . . . the infallibility which the divine Redeemer willed his church to enjoy'.[13] In other

words, the pope's infallibility is placed within the context of the Church, not outside it, and the Church, as Vatican II reminds us in its decree *Lumen Gentium*, is primarily the people of God.[14] Christ has promised an overall guidance to the people of God, which clearly has not and will not preserve it from all errors: so too for the papacy.

My favourite conciliar decree situating the papacy within the wider context of the Church comes from the fifth ecumenical council, Constantinople II in 553. It shows, in beautiful language, the wish that authority be broad-based and consensual. The council praised the previous four ecumenical councils of Nicaea I, Constantinople I, Ephesus and Chalcedon, for 'following the examples of antiquity' – thereby also pushing the principle of discussion back to the roots of Christianity. It continued to say that these four councils:

> dealt with heresies and current problems by debate in common, since it was established as certain that when the disputed question is set out by each side in communal discussion, the light of truth drives out the shadows of lying. The truth cannot be made clear in any other way when there are debates about questions of faith, since everyone requires the assistance of his neighbour.[15]

9. Ecumenical Councils and the Future

This final reflection partly summarises points already made. It is that a more conciliar approach surely represents the best way forward for ecumenism. The decree from the second Council of Constantinople, cited above, makes the point clearly. The Orthodox Church and the non-Chalcedonian (Oriental Orthodox) churches, as well as the churches of the Reformation, all use conciliar (synodical) forms of government and councils were fundamental to Church order in the first millennium of Christianity. Any form of reunion that is likely to be acceptable to these churches will require the Catholic Church to return to a more conciliar form of government.

The Catholic Church's long-standing suspicion of conciliarism was mentioned in the third of these reflections;[16] also how damaging and unnecessary this suspicion is. The Catholic Church can learn from other churches regarding the conciliar dimension of Church government but it also has much to contribute to the debate inasmuch as it has preserved better than other churches many other aspects of Church order – the papacy is but one example – which are important complements and balances to councils. Despite this suspicion of councils, moreover, the Catholic Church has in

fact held exceptionally effective councils – Trent and Vatican II are obvious examples – and so has good experience of them to offer to others.

Even within the Catholic Church, conciliarism offers a helpful way forward. Recently, encouraged by the late pope's encyclical *Ut unum sint*, there has been considerable discussion of reform of the Catholic Church's structures of government. Too much focus and hope, in my opinion, has been upon reform of the papacy and of the Roman Curia.[17] It is notoriously difficult for any institution to reform itself, so there may be an unacceptably long wait for these reforms. The councils, on the other hand, offer another way forward, one that has its origins at the centre of the Church's tradition and whose orthodoxy is therefore guaranteed and yet is also acceptable to other Christian churches.

This way forward, too, offers many possibilities for future developments. Flexibility of arrangements in the councils of the past means that this same quality is possible in the future. In terms of place, as mentioned, the first eight ecumenical councils were held in modern Turkey, half of them in Asia. Future ecumenical councils, therefore, could return to Asia or be held in Africa or America: Bangalore or Kinshasa or New York? In terms of organisation, the first eight councils were summoned by the emperors or empresses of the day, presided over by them directly or through their officials, and their decrees were promulgated by them. So the laity, including women, may play a greater role in ecumenical councils to come. Indeed, Constantine, emperor at the time of Nicaea I, was not a Christian, at least according to our modern criteria, inasmuch as he had not yet been baptised. So, maybe influences and individuals from outside the visible Church will return to play a fuller role in the councils of the future? In many ways the councils show how inventive the Church can be in its arrangements.

In government, indeed, the councils were usually ahead of their time. The early councils, especially, offered a model to secular government and society: they were more open and more democratic than their counterparts in secular life. Then, indeed, the Church as a whole, in which the councils played an integral part, was a leader in society. It seems to have offered more opportunities to women or to slaves, for example, than they were afforded by secular society.[18] This is a tradition of which Christians, and Catholics, can be proud. Now, on the contrary, the Catholic Church is in danger of lagging behind. It is placing excessive emphasis on the government of the Church being different from that of secular society – that it has its own hierarchical forms of government that have nothing to do with secular democracy – and on the need for the Church to be counter-cultural. Earlier the Church had less fear of

other institutions. It was more ready to adopt for itself the good elements in them, to use and then to improve upon them, to give a lead in society rather than to follow reluctantly or to distance itself unnecessarily. We saw a revival of this leadership in government, on the part of the Church, at the time of Vatican II, but the momentum does not seem to have been maintained. The councils open people's eyes to hopeful possibilities for the future.

To end, let me disown any wish to urge the calling of another ecumenical council soon and any ability to prophecy when the next one will take place. My feeling is that Vatican II needs more years of assimilation. Another council too soon could produce rushed and divisive results – rather as Ephesus II did, the 'Robber' council back in 449. There is nothing surprising about this need of 'reception': major councils such as Nicaea I, Chalcedon and Trent all took at least a century for the Church to digest. Councils depend above all upon the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so they often occur at times and in ways that are unexpected to us: God's ways are not ours, and the Holy Spirit is full of surprises. No more so was this the case than with Vatican II, which almost nobody except Pope John XXIII seems to have expected.

The point of this ninth reflection is rather to urge the importance of conciliarism within the Church at lower levels. Synod, the equivalent of council, is an evocative word formed from two Greek words meaning 'together' (σύν) and 'journey' (ὁδός). The sense is of travelling companions, people meeting for a purpose, with an unknown journey before them, in hope and expectation. This is beautiful image of the pilgrim church and a hopeful omen for the people of God as Christianity enters its third millennium.

ARTICLES
(in chronological order of publication)

The African Church and the First Five Ecumenical Councils

Introduction

THE *Lineamenta* for the forthcoming Africa Synod[1] emphasises, in its Historical Introduction, the importance of Early Christianity in Africa. It says:

> It needs to be recalled that the contemporary evangelization of Africa does not represent the first effort to Christianize this continent. The ancient flourishing churches of North Africa . . . produced luminaries, such as Tertullian, Cyprian and Augustine . . . Cyril and Athanasius . . .[2]

One aspect of the flowering of these ancient Churches of Africa was their contribution to the first five ecumenical councils.[3] The Historical Introduction of the *Lineamenta* does not, in fact, dwell on this contribution. That is one reason why it merits further attention, though there are also other reasons. There is the affinity of subject matter; that is to say, we are approaching a new Synod and it is natural that we want to investigate the work of earlier councils.[4] Secondly and of more importance, this contribution was of such enormous significance. The five councils were decisive for the development of Christian doctrine and of all the National Churches, the African Church made perhaps the most significant contribution to them. Thirdly, one hopes that the forthcoming Synod will be an event not just for Africa, but will bear fruit for the Universal Church. This hope echoes the effects of Africa's contribution to these five councils: for the effects were not restricted to this continent but rather have had a huge influence upon the whole Church throughout its history.

Nicaea I

At the first Ecumenical Council, Nicaea I in 325, Africa produced both the immediate cause for the council and a large measure of its solution. The immediate reason for the council being summoned was the controversial opinions of Arius. He came from North Africa, probably from Libya, and it was at Alexandria, that his ideas came to prominence.

Arius' teachings, as well as their condemnation at Nicaea, must be seen in the context of North Africa's crucial role in the development of Christian life and doctrine in the century and a half before the council. Thus it was above all at Alexandria with its Catechetical School and brilliant teachers, notably Clement and Origen, and at Carthage, presided over by the great Tertullian, 'Father of Latin theology', that Christianity first seriously came to terms with the dominant philosophy and intellectual culture of the period, Hellenism, and that within this framework the doctrine of the Trinity began to be explored. Tertullian, indeed, was among the earliest theologians to use the word 'Trinity'. Other aspects of Christian life also flourished. There were widespread conversions of the people, a remarkable proliferation in the number of Episcopal Sees, and the birth of Christian monasticism, both eremitic with St Anthony and cenobitic with St Pachomius. Anthony was a friend and supporter of Athanasius, the opponent of Arius. Christianity, moreover, began to spread south along the Nile Valley so that it was no longer confined to the Mediterranean Coastline. North Africa, in short, was the intellectual and spiritual powerhouse of Christianity at this time. There is nothing surprising about this fact. Politically, socially and economically the region, with its capital Alexandria, the second city of the Mediterranean world, was then one of the most developed areas of the Roman Empire.

The Arian controversy, which resulted in such important advances for the development of Christian doctrine, must, therefore, be placed squarely in the context of the African Church. Arius studied, in fact, not at Alexandria but in all probability at Antioch in Syria, under the priest Lucian, the founder of that city's theological school. But it was to Alexandria that he returned, being appointed priest of the church of Baucalis in the city. There his fame spread and he clashed with the Patriarch Alexander, who ordered him never to propound his views again. When Arius refused to obey, Alexander excommunicated him and in around 321 summoned a Synod of the whole Egyptian church, which duly condemned Arius again.

Alexander persisted in his opposition to Arius's teachings. It was he who appears to have been largely responsible for persuading Emperor Constantine,

through his envoy Bishop Hosius of Cordoba, that a reconciliation with Arius's teachings was impossible and that the issues were so serious that they could be solved only by a council of the whole Church. Alexander, accompanied by his young deacon and secretary Athanasius, together with a group of around 20 other bishops from Egypt and Libya, duly attended the Council at Nicaea. This group, led by their Patriarch Alexander, seem to have played a decisive role in securing the condemnation of Arius,[5] but the actual verbal formulations must have come from elsewhere: the 'homoousion' from various fathers led by Hosius and the basis of the Creed probably from the Church of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the Egyptian bishops, led by Alexander and with the skilful intellectual support of Athanasius, appear to have been crucial in persuading the majority of the Council Fathers – who belonged to a 'middle party' which initially wanted a reconciliation between the conflicting viewpoints – that at stake were serious theological issues which could not be compromised, and that a clear condemnation of Arius's teachings was the only acceptable solution.

Finally, the Council addressed itself to the particular problem of the Meletian Schism in the Egyptian Church. It supported the Patriarch Alexander but showed considerable leniency towards Meletius and his followers.

Constantinople I

At the second Ecumenical Council, Constantinople I in 381, the African influence may appear, at first sight, to have received something of a setback. The Council was essentially an assembly of the Eastern Church which was only later recognised as 'Ecumenical' by the Universal Church. Virtually all the approximately 150 participants were from the East. Timothy, Patriarch of Alexandria, appears to have been the only bishop from Africa and he arrived late – not surprisingly since his predecessor, Peter, had only died earlier in the year. He played a part in having Gregory of Nazianzen's candidacy for the See of Constantinople rejected. But in other respects the Council represented a setback for the Church of Alexandria, especially with respect to the rising claims of Constantinople, the 'New Rome', which was overtaking Alexandria as the second city of the Empire. Thus the earlier ordination of Maximus 'the Cynic' to the See of Constantinople, carried out by Peter, patriarch of Alexandria, was declared invalid. Canon two, which confined the patriarch of Alexandria's jurisdiction to Egypt, was an implicit rebuke to Peter for his ordination of Maximus and halted any lingering claim that the Church

of Alexandria might have to primacy over all the Eastern Churches. The last point was made explicit in Canon three, which gave second rank in the Universal Church to the See of Constantinople, reversing the primacy in the East given to Alexandria by Canon six of *Nicaea I*, though canon three was never accepted by the African Church or indeed outside the Eastern Church.

However, much more important than any jurisdictional disputes was *Constantinople I*'s confirmation of the Nicene Creed. Indeed this confirmation was the principal reason why the Council was later recognised as 'Ecumenical'. It took the form of issuing an updated version of the Nicene Creed (=N). This revised version, more accurately called the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (=N-C), is the 'Nicene Creed' as we know it. It is the version that Catholics recite at the Eucharist every Sunday and on Solemnities and it has been retained by all traditional churches – Catholic and other – as the basic credal formula. It adds some important phrases about the Son which go against the Arian party, as well as several clauses about the Holy Spirit which counter the Messalians or Pneumatomachians. But essentially it was a confirmation of the Creed promulgated by the Council of Nicaea. Indeed, the affinities are so close that at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, which provides us with the earliest known text of N-C,[6] the two versions are referred to as a single creed.[7]

As a confirmation of N, the N-C version represents the continuing African influence. The African Church, principally in the persons of the Patriarch Alexander and his deacon Athanasius and other bishops of the Egyptian church, played a crucial role in the approval of N by the Council of Nicaea, as we have seen. Moreover, this was the Creed for which the majority of the African Church continued to struggle, above all in the person of Athanasius. As patriarch of Alexandria from 328 to 373 he led the opposition to the resurgence of Arianism in the middle decades of the century, so that although he died some years before Constantinople I was summoned, N-C was a vindication of what he, and the African Church more generally, had stood for. Thus the African influence upon the council may be said to have been crucial, albeit indirect. And this contribution to Constantinople I has proved to be an enduring and deep one for the whole Church since, as mentioned, N-C has remained the most important credal formula for all Christians down to this day.

Ephesus

If at Constantinople I the influence of the African Church was indirect and preparatory, at Ephesus in 431, the third Ecumenical Council, it was very

immediate and direct. The immediate issue of the council is well known, the controversy surrounding *Theotokos* ('God-bearer' or 'Mother of God') as a title of Mary. Already before the convocation of the council, Patriarch Cyril of Alexandria had established himself as the leading opponent of Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople whose rejection of *Theotokos* had initiated the controversy. Cyril had written several long letters to Nestorius explaining his views and he had gained the support of Pope Celestine I. He made his way to the Council, which had been summoned by Emperor Theodosius II, at the head of a large party comprising over 40 Egyptian bishops and many clerics and monks. Cyril took charge of the council, not even waiting for the arrival of the party sympathetic to Nestorius, which was led by Patriarch John of Antioch, or the papal legates. He declared the Council opened on 22 June and, backed by the strong contingent from North Africa, he persuaded the Fathers to condemn Nestorius' teachings as well as to depose him as patriarch. The eventual outcome was something of a compromise but it went largely in favour of Cyril and the African Church. Thus the letter sent by John of Antioch to Cyril in 433 formed the basis of the agreement between the two parties. It received papal approval, ignored Cyril's more extreme claims propounded in his *Twelve Anathemas*, condemned various teachings of Nestorius and accepted his deposition as patriarch. It also, most importantly, accepted the title of 'Mother of God' or 'God-bearer' for Mary. By securing the acceptance, or rather confirmation of this title of Mary in the Christian tradition, the African Church undoubtedly had a profound and lasting influence upon both the devotional life of the Universal Church and the development of Christological doctrine.

Chalcedon

At first sight the Council of Chalcedon in 451, the fourth Ecumenical Council, may seem, like Constantinople I, to have been a setback for the African church. Already the Vandal invasions were having their effect upon the region. Hence, although the Egyptian Church was adequately represented at the Council, only two bishops attended from the Western, Latin-speaking parts of North Africa. The Council witnessed the humiliation of Dioscorus, the Patriarch of Alexandria. He had presided over the 'Robber' Council of Ephesus two years earlier in 449, which had declared orthodox the Monophysite teachings of the monk Eutyches and had deposed Flavian as Patriarch of Constantinople. Chalcedon reversed this 'Second' Council of Ephesus. Eutyches was condemned, Flavian was reinstated, and Dioscorus

was deposed as patriarch of Alexandria. Finally, Canon 28 reasserted Constantinople's claims to be the first See after Rome and therefore senior to Alexandria, though this canon was never accepted outside the East.

Chalcedon's definition of the two Natures of Christ spelt defeat for the unitary Christology of the extreme Alexandrian School. The Egyptian Church as a whole remained uneasy with the definition and there gradually emerged the schisms of the Coptic and Ethiopian Monophysite Churches. But it would be wrong to see Chalcedon only as a defeat for the African Church. The council, indeed, supported the Alexandrian school of theology much more than it rejected it. Its central work, contained principally in the *Definition of the Faith*, was to confirm the teaching and authority of the first three Ecumenical Councils, to which, as we have seen, the African church, especially the Church of Alexandria, made the single most important contribution. Even the doctrine of the two natures of Christ was wholly unacceptable only to the more extreme Alexandrian theologians, and the breach with the African Monophysite churches became unhealable only after the Arab invasions of the seventh century and the isolation from the rest of the Christian world that they imposed upon these churches. Up to that point North Africa remained more or less within the mainstream of the Christian Church. Chalcedon was the crown and seal of the councils of the Early Church. It provided an inheritance from which the whole Church has benefited down to this day – one that was fundamentally affected by the African contribution.

Constantinople II

The last Council to be considered is Constantinople II in 553, the fifth Ecumenical Council. It was the last of the early Ecumenical Councils at which the African Church made a significant contribution. As we have seen, the North African church, especially the Egyptian Church, was unhappy with the *diophysite* definition (two natures of Christ) of Chalcedon. *Constantinople II* was an attempt by Emperor Justinian to draw the Egyptian Church back into the mainstream of the Universal Church by making concessions in a Monophysite direction. His instrument was the *Sentence against the Three Chapters*, a document drawn up by him which, while not formally attacking Chalcedon or going so far as to approve Monophysite formulae, nevertheless impugned Chalcedon's status by condemning as too sympathetic to Nestorius the writings of three persons who had been explicitly spared from condemnation by that council: Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrrhus and Ibas of Edessa.

The *Sentence against the Three Chapters* may be regarded as brutal and unnecessary. It was only approved by the Council under pressure from the emperor and with much hesitation. This reluctance came not only from the Antiochenes in the East but also from Pope Vigilius and many bishops in the West. In Africa, the Church of Alexandria, not surprisingly, went along with the *Sentence* but it was vigorously opposed by the bishops further West. Thus while the *Sentence* was undoubtedly influenced by the African Church – that is to say, by the emperor's desire to draw the Monophysites back into the unity of the Church – it certainly cannot be said to have been initiated or imposed upon the rest of the Church by the Africans. The initiative throughout was the emperor's. In fact his aim in imposing the *Sentence* was not realised. The Monophysites were not placated and the Coptic and Ethiopian Churches moved further into formal schism. In this sense Constantinople II represents a somewhat sad farewell for the African Church from the scene of Ecumenical Councils. But even here all was not loss. Despite the aggressive tone of the *Sentence* and the ill-feeling which it caused – largely in fact directed towards Emperor Justinian (who as a result never regained his confidence in religious matters) rather than towards the Church of Alexandria – the *Sentence* was careful to give formal support to, and thereby to further canonise, the first four Ecumenical Councils, to which the African Church had made such a vital contribution.

Conclusion

By the time the next Ecumenical Council assembled, Constantinople III in 680–81, North Africa was being overrun by Arabs professing Islam. The surviving Coptic and Ethiopian churches were hardening in their Monophysitism and thereby in their schism from the rest of Christendom. The African contribution to the Ecumenical Councils of the Church had effectively come to an end, for the time being.

A long time passed before the African Church was again to exercise a major influence upon the Universal Church: not until the twentieth century. This long interval is all the more reason for recalling the enormous influence exercised by the African Church upon the Early Church. There has been an ebb and flow in the influence of various regions of the world in the history of Christianity. It may be felt that the Church became too Westernised for too long. So now that in recent years Christianity has become less centred on Europe, more rooted in other regions of the world, including Africa, it is worth recalling that Europe had not always been the centre: that for the first

six centuries the East and North Africa were more important than Western Europe; that in the area of Ecumenical Councils the African Church's contribution was probably the greatest of any single national Church; and that, even if active African participation at the councils effectively came to an end after the sixth century, this contribution, through the enduring effects of the early councils, has had a lasting and profound influence upon the Universal Church down to the present time.

I write as an outsider to Africa, coming as I do from England. Much of what I have written must seem very inadequate. I am particularly expecting two possible criticisms.

First, I have spoken too glibly of the African church, as if I was referring to the whole of Africa when in fact I was only referring to the churches of the North African coastal strip, or even only to the Egyptian church? What is the relationship between North and sub-Saharan Africa? That is certainly an important issue. I will make just two comments. First, Christianity during the first six centuries, as is well known, spread quite far South, as far as Nubia and Ethiopia, so that while it never penetrated deeply into sub-Saharan Africa it would, on the other hand, be wrong to say that it was confined to the Mediterranean coastal strip. Secondly, there was at least some consciousness of Africa as a continent. Here again it would obviously be misleading to suggest that there was a close identity between the different geographical regions, especially between Northern and sub-Saharan Africa. On the other hand, the Continent was known to include much more than the northern coastal strip; indeed its circumnavigation and some idea of its geography had been common knowledge since the time of Herodotus. One does not wish either to exaggerate or to minimise the identity of Africa at that time, but it was probably as well defined as that of Europe.

The second possible criticism concerns the degree of inculturation. Were the churches of North Africa, which made such a vital contribution to the early councils, largely churches of Greek and Latin colonisers which never became inculturated into the indigenous people of the time, so that it is misleading to speak of them as African churches? This is a much debated question, I am aware, but I would suggest here too a middle position. Thus, while Christianity was never adequately inculturated into the Berber culture, as the *Lineamenta* says,[8] there was clearly a good measure of inculturation into the Egyptian and Ethiopian cultures. Moreover, the widespread conversion of people to Christianity and the long time of six centuries during which Christianity survived in North Africa prove that it was not a religion that was wholly alien to the people. In North Africa as elsewhere at that time societies

were probably quite fluid and inter-connected. So while it is important to recognise the limitations of Christian missionary efforts, it would surely be wrong to suggest that Christianity was simply imposed on Africa and remained a thoroughly alien religion for six centuries.

An outsider may perhaps be permitted a few final reflections on the style of the African contribution to the early councils. First, one admires the conviction with which the Africans concerned stuck to their beliefs, often in the face of strong opposition. If the Alexandrian Patriarchs Alexander, Athanasius and Cyril had not kept to their convictions, how much poorer the whole Church would be! If there is a criticism, it is that they could be too forceful, too brusque. This danger can be seen within the African churches, in the tendency to push differences to the point of schism: the Meletian, Donatist and Monophysite schisms. But it can also be seen in the dealings of the Africans with other churches. If Athanasius, Cyril and later the Monophysites had been more sensitive and tactful, the Early Church might have developed more harmoniously and with fewer defections. Hopefully in the coming years the African churches will blend steadfastness of purpose with their customary graciousness and respect for others!

The effects of the African contribution to the early councils were not confined to the African church but rather benefited the whole Church, as we have seen. So one hopes the forthcoming Africa Synod will not be seen as an exclusively African affair but rather as also an event for the Universal Church. Hopefully the African churches of today will continue to accept their responsibility for the whole Church, will continue to share their gifts and talents which are so enriching and necessary for the wider Christian community.

Finally we may note that the African contribution was not just to the doctrine taught by the early councils, it was also to conciliarism in the Church. That is to say, councils formed the normal form of government and way of proceeding in the first millennium of the Church's history. That this was the case owed much to the contribution of the African churches in the early centuries. They not only participated in the ecumenical councils, they also held many and regular local councils of their own. These local councils fed into, and followed on from, the ecumenical councils: there was a close interconnection between the matters covered.[9] Accordingly, one hopes the forthcoming Africa Synod will not be just a 'one-off' or isolated event, but rather will contribute to the revival of conciliarism which has been taking place with such great benefits throughout the whole Church since the second Vatican Council. Therefore it is appropriate to end with a quotation from Constantinople II in 553, the last of the early Ecumenical Councils at which

the African church made a major contribution. In speaking about the work of the first four Ecumenical councils, the advice given by Constantinople II may serve as a charter not only for the forthcoming Africa Synod and its preparation but also for the revival of conciliarism throughout the universal Church:

> The Holy Fathers, who have gathered at intervals in the four Holy Councils, have followed the examples of antiquity. They dealt with heresies and current problems by debate in common, since it was established as certain that when the disputed question is set out by each side in communal discussions, the light of truth drives out the shadows of lying.
>
> The truth cannot be made clear in any other way when there are debates about questions of faith, since everyone requires the assistance of his neighbour. As Solomon says in his proverbs: 'A brother who helps a brother shall be exalted like a strong city; he shall be as strong as a well-established kingdom'. Again in Ecclesiastes he says: 'Two are better than one, for they have a good reward for their toil'. And the Lord himself says: 'Amen I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'[10]

The Eucharist in the Ecumenical Councils[1]

In the eucharist – the celebration and re-presentation of the last supper of the Lord, of his suffering, death and resurrection, of the whole Christ event – Christians find a meeting *par excellence*, in this life, of the divine, and the human, the spiritual and material, the eternal and temporal.

My task is to trace the teaching of the eucharist as it is found in the councils of the church. I will in fact be limiting myself to what are called, by Roman Catholics and in part by other Christian churches, the 21 ecumenical and general councils, from Nicaea I in 325 to Vatican II in 1962–65. The first seven of them, before the beginning of the sad schism between the churches of East and West in the eleventh century, are recognised as ecumenical councils – that is to say, as councils of the whole Church, as distinct from diocesan or provincial or national councils – by both the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, usually by the Anglican church, and, when pressed, by many other Christian churches. The disputed eighth council, Constantinople IV in 869–70, is not strictly relevant here as it issued no decrees about the eucharist. This lecture might end with the seventh council, Nicaea II in 787; yet the Church's clock cannot be stopped when a major schism occurs. In order to trace the story down to the present, to include the full sweep of Christian history, albeit from a limited angle, I shall include the ten general councils of the Western church in the Middle Ages, Lateran I in 1123 to Lateran V in 1512–17, and the three general councils of the Roman Catholic Church since the Reformation: Trent in 1545–63, Vatican I in 1869–70 and Vatican II in 1962–65. It is important to remember that these are not regarded as ecumenical by either the Orthodox Church or the churches of the Reformation.[2]

The councils did not comprehensively focus on the subject of the eucharist. That is to say, most of the councils were called principally to meet particular

doctrinal controversies so that a full treatment of the eucharist cannot be expected from each of them. In spite of this, sometimes omissions are as significant as statements. Teaching about the eucharist usually came either incidentally or when the sacrament was the subject of controversy: even in the latter case the council normally treats only the issues in dispute and not the eucharist as a whole. We may also note the generally reserved or conservative nature of the councils' teaching: they say what they feel needs to be said but do not go further, into uncharted waters. Here the principle of unanimity is important. Church councils are unlike the British Parliament where a majority of one is sufficient to pass an act. In at least the ecumenical councils unanimous consent, or virtual unanimity, has been required so that formulas had to be found that were acceptable to all or almost all the members of the council. The result of this is that divisive or adventurous statements were avoided as far as possible. Despite these limitations, the 21 councils provide a precious insight into the teaching on the eucharist of a major tradition of the Christian people.

In general terms, the early councils were mainly concerned with the people present at the eucharist. The medieval councils and Trent turned their attention towards the priest, the objects used in the eucharist and especially towards the presence of Christ. Vatican II returned to the concern of the early Church for the people present, though with rather different interests in mind.

The concern for the worthiness of the people present at the eucharist, especially those who would receive communion, is most evident in the first of the councils, Nicaea I in 325. Persecutions against Christians had raged shortly before the council, before the conversion of the emperor Constantine, and the question of how to reconcile Christians who had lapsed because of persecution forms the background to many of the council's 20 canons. Thus, Canon 11 prescribed three grades of penance for those who had committed serious (unspecified) sins before they could participate fully in the eucharist. First, they were to spend three years as 'hearers'; that is, they would hear the scripture readings and then depart. Next, they were to spend seven years as 'prostrators'; that is to say, after the scripture readings and the homily, at the beginning of the offertory, they would prostrate themselves before the celebrant, receive his blessing, and then depart. Finally, 'for two years they shall take part with the people in the prayers, though not in the offering'. This meant that they could remain throughout the eucharistic prayer but not receive communion (*Decrees*, p. 11). Canon 12 prescribed a similar pattern of reintegration for soldiers. It probably had in mind the soldiers in the army of Constantine's former anti-Christian co-emperor Licinius: they were

to spend three years as 'hearers' and ten more as 'prostrators'. In this canon we note some mercy, however: 'For those who through their fear and tears and perseverance and good works give evidence of their conversion by deeds and not by outward show, when they have completed their appointed term as hearers, they may properly take part in the prayers' – that is, they can be dispensed from the ten years as 'prostrators' – and 'the bishop is competent to decide even more favourably in their regard. But those who have taken the matter lightly and have thought that the outward form of entering the church is all that is required for their conversion, they must complete their term of penance to the full' (*Decrees*, pp. 11–12).

Canon 13, 'Concerning those who seek communion at the point of death', likewise mixes discipline and mercy. 'The dying are not to be deprived of their last most necessary viaticum. But if such persons have been admitted to communion and taken part in the eucharist and then recover their health, they shall return to the state of "prayer"' – that is to say, they remain for the eucharistic prayer but do not receive communion, obviously a precaution against penitents feigning serious illness in order to escape penance! 'As a general rule, however, in the case of those who are dying and wish to share in the eucharist, the bishop upon examining the matter shall give them a share in the offering' (*Decrees*, p. 12).

Canon 18, which seeks to suppress a revolutionary movement among deacons, gives an insight into rank at the eucharist, another aspect of sacred materiality:

> It has come to the attention of this synod that in some places deacons give communion to presbyters even though neither canon law nor custom allows this, namely that those who have no authority to offer the eucharist should give the body of Christ to those who do offer. Indeed in some places deacons now receive the eucharist even before bishops. All these practices must be suppressed. Deacons must remain within their own limits, knowing that they are ministers of the bishop and subordinate to presbyters. Let them receive the eucharist according to their order, after the presbyters and from the hands of the bishop or presbyter. Nor shall deacons sit among the presbyters for such an arrangement is contrary to canon law and to rank. (*Decrees*, pp. 14–15)

Canon 20, the last of Nicaea's disciplinary canons, concerns posture at the eucharist. 'There are some people who kneel on Sundays and during the season

from Easter to Pentecost but this council decrees, in order that the same observances may be maintained in every diocese, that people should offer their prayers to the Lord standing.' Bodily posture is an important aspect of sacred materiality, of the relationship between the human and the divine within us and in our relationship with God. The reasons for the decree are not given, apart from the desire for uniformity, but standing is more symbolic of resurrection than kneeling and Sundays and Eastertide are times *par excellence* of the Resurrection: maybe, too, kneeling was discouraged lest parishioners in good standing be confused with the 'prostrators' and others doing penance (*Decrees*, p. 16).

For the next reference to the eucharist we must pass to the last of the generally recognised ecumenical councils before the schism of East and West: Nicaea II in 787. There is no mention of the eucharist in the great doctrinal councils in which the Trinity and the divinity and humanity in Christ were thought through: Constantinople I in 381, Ephesus in 431, Chalcedon 20 years later in 451, Constantinople II and III in 553 and 680–81. The absence of references may seem surprising and, of course, the teaching of these councils regarding the divinity and humanity of Christ had a bearing on the teaching of later councils on the eucharist. But the simple fact is that the eucharist was not the subject of controversy in this period and there was no pressing reason for it to appear in the decrees of the ecumenical councils.

The second Council of Nicaea was concerned principally to defend religious art. Because images of various forms were used both in the adornment of the eucharist itself and in the churches in which the eucharist was celebrated, the council indirectly had a huge influence upon the subsequent development of the eucharist. Its teaching was clear and straightforward:

> We decree … that like the figure of the life-giving cross, the revered and holy images, whether painted or made of mosaic or of other suitable material, are to be exposed in the holy churches of God, on sacred instruments and vestments, on walls and panels, in houses and by public ways. These are the images of our Lord, God and saviour, Jesus Christ, of our Lady without blemish, the holy mother of God, of the revered angels and of the saints. The more frequently they are seen in representational art, the more are those people who see them drawn to remember and long for those who serve as models, and to pay these images the tribute of salutation and respectful veneration (Greek, ἀσπασμον και τιμητικὴν προσκύνησιν). Certainly this is not the full adoration (Greek, ἀληθινὴν λατρείαν) in accordance

with our faith, which is properly paid only to the divine nature, but it resembles that given to the figure of the honoured and life-giving cross and to the holy books of the gospels and to other sacred cult objects. Furthermore, people are drawn to honour these images with the offering of incense and lights, as was piously established by ancient custom. Indeed, the honour paid to an image traverses it, reaching the model; and whoever venerates the image, venerates the person represented in that image. (*Decrees*, pp. 135–6)

Nicaea II thus sealed Christianity's definitive break with both Judaism and Islam regarding religious art. Indeed, one of the motives of the iconoclast movement had been the hope, still alive among Christians in the seventh and eighth centuries, that Jews and Muslims might be converted *en masse* to the Christian faith and therefore Christians should abstain from anything that might offend their religious sensibilities, including what touched on religious art of a representational nature. The iconophiles' victory over the iconoclasts at the council was a major factor in ending these hopes and in securing the artistic heritage of the Christian church and of the eucharist more particularly.

In the medieval councils attention shifted away from the congregation towards the presence of Christ in the eucharist, towards the priest and towards the objects used in the eucharist. The fourth Lateran Council of 1215 provided the fullest treatment. This, the greatest of the reforming, pastoral councils of the medieval West, marked a high point in the movement that had begun in the second half of the eleventh century, the so-called Gregorian Reform (named after its early initiator, pope Gregory VII, 1074–87). The movement had started from a desire to free the Church from excessive lay control, to free the sacred from the material, but proceeded further in sharpening the distinction between the two – almost a dualism at times – and in exalting the sacred and spiritual over the material. In terms of the eucharist, the presence of the divine Christ and the need for purity on the part of the priest, which became closely associated with celibacy, were emphasised. We see here much of the direction of the Western church, after the schism, which now sadly lacks the contribution of the Eastern church.

Lateran IV's best-known statement regarding the eucharist comes in its creed, which formed the council's first canon. In the creed's final paragraph, which treats of various sacraments, it had this to say of the eucharist:

[Christ's] body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms of bread and wine, the bread and wine

> having been changed in substance by the divine power [Latin,
> *transubstantiatis pane in corpus et vino in sanguinem potestate divina*]
> into his body and blood, so that in order to achieve this mystery of
> unity we receive from God what God received from us. Nobody can
> effect this sacrament except a priest who has been properly ordained
> according to the church's keys, which Jesus Christ himself gave to
> the apostles and their successors. (*Decrees*, p. 230)

The word 'transubstantiation' had already been used earlier by individual
theologians beginning, as far as we know, with Peter Damian in the late
eleventh century and coming into frequent use in the second half of the
twelfth century[3] – but in Lateran IV for the first time the term appears in an
official statement of the Church. It is not a formal definition of transubstanti-
ation, rather the word 'transubstantiatis' appears in the course of a sentence,
as part of an ablative absolute construction. Other descriptions are not
excluded, for example 'mystical presence' or 'sacramental presence', which
were used by the early Church. Soon, however, transubstantiation became
the preferred terminology and a touchstone of orthodoxy. After the words
of consecration said by the priest, only the appearances or accidents of bread
and wine remained, what was truly or substantially present was Christ's body
and blood. Here was sacred materiality *par excellence*, realised through a
miracle: not just a sign of or participation in the divine, rather the very
presence of God, the divine presence itself, in our material world. This new
approach or emphasis was to dominate eucharistic teaching and devotion
in the Western church, and later in the Roman Catholic Church, for many
centuries. The multiplication of masses for both the living and the dead,
the veneration of the sacrament kept in a tabernacle, and praying before it,
the feast of Corpus Christi, officially established for the Western church by
Pope Urban IV in 1264, and the attendant devotions, such as Corpus Christi
processions, also a liturgy of the eucharist, with hymns such as *O sacrum
convivium, Lauda Sion salvatorem* and *Anima Christi*, indeed one might say a
whole approach to the material culture of Christianity, took a cue and received
official sanction from this decree of the fourth Lateran Council.

Most other references to the eucharist in the decrees of the fourth Lateran
Council refer either to the priest or to churches and the various objects
used in the celebration of the sacrament. The emphasis on the divine in the
sacrament, through the imagery of transubstantiation, increased the need for
sacredness in both the minister and the surroundings of the sacrament: the
creation of sacred space. We have already seen in the first canon, the creed,

the teaching that only a properly ordained priest can celebrate the eucharist. Canon 4, entitled 'The pride of Greeks towards Latins', reminds us that the quest for purity in the eucharist pertained to the Eastern church as well as to the western. 'For after the Greek church together with certain associates and supporters withdrew from the obedience of the apostolic see' – referring to the East–West schism formalised in 1054 and exacerbated by the crusaders' sack of Constantinople in 1204 – 'the Greeks began to detest the Latins so much that, among other wicked things which they committed out of contempt for them, when Latin priests celebrated on their altars they would not offer sacrifice on them until they had washed them, as if the altars had been defiled thereby.' The decree concluded predictably with the demand that the Greeks desist from such practices (*Decrees*, pp. 235–6).

Canon 14 begins a run of five canons concerned with clerical morals, entitled: 'Punishment of clerical incontinence', 'Preventing drunkenness among the clergy', 'The dress and occupations of clerics', 'The feasting of prelates and, their negligence at divine services', 'Sentences involving the shedding of blood or a duel are forbidden to clerics' (*Decrees*, pp. 242–4). In some of these five canons the worthiness of the priest celebrating the eucharist is mentioned explicitly; in others it is an implicit concern. Canon 14, for example, reads, 'Let clerics beware of every vice involving lust … so that they may be worthy to minister in the sight of almighty God with a pure heart and an unsullied body', and 'any cleric who has been suspended for his incontinence and presumes to celebrate divine services shall be deprived of his benefices and deposed in perpetuity'. Canon 17, in a similar vein, linked the propensity of bishops and other prelates to 'pass almost half the night in unnecessary feasting and forbidden conversation, not to mention other things', with their inability to celebrate the eucharist properly in the morning.

Canon 19 focused on church buildings. There was concern that they were often used as repositories for storing furniture and the decree forbade this practice except in emergencies, such as 'enemy incursions, sudden fires or other urgent necessities'. Churches should be 'basilicas of God' and not become 'houses of the laity': vestments, chalices and other liturgical items must he kept clean and tidy. It is a straightforward decree illustrating the importance attached to churches as sacred buildings in which the eucharist might be celebrated worthily. Canon 20 sought to assure the safe-keeping of the eucharist: 'We decree that chrism oil and the eucharist are to be kept locked away in a safe place in all churches so that no audacious hand can reach them to do anything horrible or impious.' We are still before the time of keeping the eucharist in a tabernacle for veneration by the faithful; what is in

mind rather is keeping it for distribution to the sick, but we see the emphasis on the sacredness of the consecrated bread in itself: the continuing presence of Christ after the mass has been finished (*Decrees*, p. 244).

Canon 21, on annual confession and communion, brings us back to the laity but with a different and more individual emphasis from that of the early church. The canon ordered all Christians, after they have reached the age of discernment, to confess their sins to their parish priest at least once a year and then to receive the eucharist around the time of Easter 'unless they think, for a good reason and on the advice of their parish priest, that they should abstain from receiving the eucharist for a while' (*Decrees*, p. 245). The need of confession in preparation for receiving communion links with the penances of the early church but the emphasis is much more individual: private confession rather than public penance, individual reception of the eucharist rather than a communal meal. The emphasis, too, is upon the sacredness and awesomeness of the eucharistic species: the canon ordered annual communion precisely because few but the very holy dared to approach the sacrament even that frequently. Richard Helmslay, a witty English Dominican friar from Newcastle upon Tyne, was to argue from the title or first words of the decree, *Omnis utriusque sexus* (All persons of both sexes), that the obligations applied only to hermaphrodites but he was quickly condemned and was obliged to make a public recantation both at Durham and at Newcastle![4] The age of discernment, however, at which the obligations began, was not defined. The later medieval councils reiterated the teachings of Lateran IV. The two condemnations of John Wyclif by the Council of Constance, on 4 May and 6 July 1415, included strong reassertions of the doctrine of transubstantiation (*Decrees*, pp. 411 and 422). The decree against the Hussites of Bohemia, issued by the same Council of Constance, which forbade communion under both kinds for the laity and insisted upon a fast, contains an illuminating passage as to how the Church understood changes in the eucharist over the centuries: the change from a meal to a rite.

> Although Christ instituted this venerable sacrament after a meal and ministered it to his apostles under the forms of both bread and wine, nevertheless and notwithstanding this, the praiseworthy authority of the sacred canons and the approved custom of the Church stipulates that this sacrament ought not to be celebrated after a meal or received by the faithful without fasting, except in cases of sickness or some other necessity as permitted by law or by the Church. Moreover, just as this custom was sensibly introduced

in order to avoid various dangers and scandals, so with similar or even greater reason was it possible to introduce and sensibly observe the custom that, although this sacrament was received by the faithful under both kinds in the early Church, nevertheless later it was received under both kinds only by those confecting it and by the laity only under the form of bread. For it should be very firmly believed, and in no way doubted that the whole body and blood of Christ are truly contained under both the form of bread and the form of wine. (*Decrees*, p. 418)

Finally, for the Middle Ages, there is the definition of the eucharist issued by the Council of Florence in 1439, in a decree of reunion with some Armenian Christians, which speaks of the symbolism of the eucharist and of the meeting of the human and the divine in it.

The matter of the sacrament of the eucharist is wheat bread and wine from the vine, to which a very little water is added before the consecration. Water is added because it is believed, in accordance with the testimony of holy fathers and doctors of the church manifested long ago in disputation, that the Lord himself instituted this sacrament in wine mixed with water; because it befits the representation of the Lord's passion . . . since both blood and water are said to have flowed from Christ's side; and because it is fitting to signify the effect of this sacrament, which is the union of the Christian people with Christ. For water signifies the people according to those words of the Apocalypse, 'many waters, many peoples . . .'. (Apocalypse, 17,15) The form of the sacrament are the words of the Saviour with which he confected the sacrament and a priest speaking in the person of Christ confects it too . . . And the effect of the sacrament, which is produced in the soul of one who receives it worthily, is the union of the person with Christ. (*Decrees*, pp. 545–7)

Undoubtedly the fullest treatment of the eucharist in all the councils in question comes in the Council of Trent (1545–63). Yet for the most part Trent was reiterating the teaching of the medieval councils that we have looked at. Luther, Calvin and other theologians of the Reformation had, with differing emphases, strongly attacked the teaching of the medieval Church on the eucharist, especially the doctrine of transubstantiation, and Trent set out to defend this earlier teaching.

Trent's teaching came in three decrees.[5] First, a general decree, approved in October 1551, which stated Christ's presence in the eucharist through transubstantiation and the purpose of the sacrament, as 'spiritual food … to nourish and strengthen us in this life, . . . as an antidote to free us from daily faults and preserve us from mortal sins, . . . as a pledge of our future glory and unending happiness', and as a sign of our unity with Christ and with one another in the church. Following the emphasis on Christ's presence in the consecrated host, the decree approved various late medieval practices of venerating it outside the celebration of the eucharist, such as praying before the reserved sacrament and Corpus Christi processions (*Decrees*, pp. 693–8).

A second decree, approved in July 1562, repeated the teaching of the Council of Constance against communion under both kinds for the laity, forbidding the chalice to them (*Decrees*, pp. 726–8). The third and final decree concerning the eucharist, which was approved in September 1562, emphasised the sacrificial aspect of the mass and various practical consequences thereof. It confirmed the medieval practice of the multiplication of masses because the sacrifice of Calvary was re-enacted therein; though some attempt was made to stop abuses. The worth of masses said for both the living and the dead was reaffirmed as well as masses in honour of the saints. The same went for high masses – masses celebrated with a fuller and more solemn liturgy – and the use of candles, incense and vestments, 'by which the majesty of this great sacrifice is enhanced and the minds of the faithful are aroused by visible signs of religious devotion to contemplation of the high mysteries hidden in it'. Latin was effectively retained as the language of the liturgy and the use of the vernacular discouraged, though the latter was not entirely forbidden (*Decrees*, pp. 732–6).

There is certainly a pastoral concern in Trent's decrees on the eucharist. But the approach is mainly from above and ritual: Christ's presence in the eucharist, mediated by the priest, from which spiritual benefits in abundance flow to the faithful: rather than a more horizontal or 'from below' approach, a communal meal in which Christ is present. Trent crowned and systematised the medieval Church's concept of sacred materiality in the eucharist.

The Council of Trent dominated the theology of the Roman Catholic Church regarding the eucharist, as in so many other matters, for four centuries. The only general Council of the Roman Catholic Church during this time, Vatican I (1869–70), concerned itself with papal infallibility and the relationship between faith and reason. It did not touch on the eucharist.

When the second Vatican Council met in 1962, however, the eucharist quickly became a major concern. Pope Pius XII had issued a major document

on the reform of the liturgy in 1947, the encyclical letter *Mediator Dei,* and later he instituted an imaginative reform of the liturgy of Holy Week and Easter. These initiatives helped to gain the support of the conservatives at the council for further changes and so the reform of the liturgy, in which the eucharist occupied a central position, initially commanded widespread support among both the conservative minority and the progressive majority, as they were to emerge. As a result, the constitution on the liturgy, entitled *Sacrosanctum concilium*, was the first of the council's documents to be approved, in December 1963.[6] It was largely after the council that divisions opened up within the Roman Catholic Church over implementation of the new liturgy. At the time, both progressives and conservatives were agreed on two issues: the need for a return to the sources of the liturgy in the early Church and the need for greater participation on the part of the laity.

Both these concerns find their way into the constitution's second chapter, entitled 'The holy mystery of the eucharist'. In it the medieval and Tridentine traditions are preserved while at the same time the eucharistic theologies of the Eastern Church and the churches of the Reformation are taken into proper consideration; notably, with regard to the latter, in the emphasis upon the liturgy of the word and Christ's presence in the readings from Scripture. The chapter sought to blend all that is best in this central mystery of the Christian religion down through the centuries: sacred materiality in its richness and diversity. The first two paragraphs of the chapter come closest to a definition:

> Our saviour inaugurated the eucharistic sacrifice of his body and blood at the last supper, on the night he was betrayed, in order to make his sacrifice of the cross last throughout time until he should return; and indeed to entrust a token to the church, his beloved wife, by which to remember his death and resurrection. It is a sacrament of faithful relationships, a sign of unity, a bond of divine love, a special Easter meal. In it, 'Christ is received, the inner self is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.'

> And so the church devotes careful efforts to prevent Christian believers from attending this mystery of faith as though they were outsiders or silent onlookers: rather, having a good understanding of this mystery, through the ritual and the prayers, they should share in the worshipping event, aware of what is happening, and devoutly involved. They should be formed by God's word and refreshed at the table of the Lord's body; they should give thanks to God; they

should learn to offer themselves as they offer the immaculate victim, not just through the hands of the priest but also they themselves making the offering together with him; and as each day goes by, they should be led towards their final goal of unity with God and among themselves through the mediation of Christ, so that finally God may be all in all. (*Decrees*, p. 830)

The rest of the chapter looks to practical details that may turn this vision into reality. Especially noticeable are the importance given to the readings from Scripture, 'the rich diet of God's word', to the homily or sermon, to the use of the vernacular language rather than Latin, the practice of celebration, to communion under both kinds for the laity, though on the last three issues the decree is cautious in its recommendations and permissions. The eucharist was to be a celebration rather than a cult. Critics were later to argue that Vatican II took too much of the mystery out of the Roman Catholic mass, though this is a fine irony inasmuch as it was the progressives who successfully fought for the chapter to be entitled 'The holy mystery of the eucharist', against the conservatives who preferred the less mysterious title of 'The holy sacrifice of the mass'. This paradox reminds us that, although Christians have sought to understand and express the eucharist in a rich variety of ways through the centuries, nevertheless the mystery remains radically beyond our comprehension; though God may be present in the world, though the sacred may be present in matter, yet the divine is never confined therein.

Mary in the Ecumenical Councils of the Church[1]

The 'ecumenical councils' discussed here include the seven councils held before the beginning of the sad schism between East and West in the eleventh century. That is to say, Nicaea I in 325, Constantinople I in 381, Ephesus in 431, Chalcedon in 451, Constantinople II and III in 553 and 680–81, and Nicaea II in 787. These seven councils are recognised as ecumenical councils – that is, councils of the whole Church, as distinct from diocesan or provincial or other local councils – by both the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, generally by the Anglican Church and, when pressed, by many other Christian churches. The disputed eighth council, Constantinople IV in 869–70, need not detain us since it issued no decree touching on Mary. Although this chapter should technically end with the seventh council, Nicaea II in 787, the Church's clock cannot be stopped even when a major schism occurs. In order to trace the story down to the present, to include the full sweep of Christian history it is necessary to include all the councils that have usually been regarded as ecumenical councils by one major church, the Roman Catholic Church (at least from the Counter-Reformation until recent times). For this reason we will include the ten general councils of the Western Church in the Middle Ages, Lateran I in 1123 to Lateran V in 1512–17, and the three general councils of the Roman Catholic Church since the Reformation: Trent in 1545–63, Vatican I in 1869–70 and Vatican II in 1962–65.[2]

It is important to point out that most of the councils were called principally to meet particular doctrinal controversies so a full treatment of Mary obviously cannot be expected from each of them. However, sometimes omissions are as significant as overt statements. Teaching about Mary usually comes either incidentally or when she was the subject of controversy: even in

the latter case the council normally treats only of the issues in dispute, not Mariology as a whole. We may also note the generally reserved or conservative nature of the councils' teaching: they say what they feel needs to be said but do not go further, into uncharted waters. Here the principle of unanimity is important. Church councils are unlike the British Parliament where a majority of one is sufficient to pass an Act. At least in the ecumenical councils unanimous consent, or virtual unanimity, has been required so that formulae have had to be found that were acceptable to all or almost all the members of the council and as a result divisive or adventurous statements have been avoided as far as possible. Within these limitations, however, the councils in question provide a precious insight into the development of understanding about Mary in the Christian tradition.

To begin with the first Council of Nicaea in 325, the most striking point, at least for us today, is the omission of Mary from the creed. At the point where she might have been mentioned, the creed reads simply, 'for us humans and for our salvation he [Jesus Christ] came down and became incarnate, became human . . .'.[3] How significant was this omission? It is an impossible question to answer precisely because no minutes or other background *acta* of the council survive. It is not clear whether they once existed and have been lost or whether in fact they were never made. In addition, none of the subsequent accounts of the council by participants at it and by other writers mention the omission of Mary from the creed, so far as I am aware, which in itself is an indication that there is nothing noteworthy about it. When one looks at other creeds of the time, most of those from the West, including the old Roman creed, mention Mary; among the Eastern creeds, some do and others do not, so since the creed of Nicaea seems based on an existing Eastern creed, we may conclude, I think, that there is nothing remarkable about Mary's omission.[4] Besides the creed, the council issued 20 canons but they were of a disciplinary rather than a theological nature and it so is not surprising that Mary is not mentioned in them either.

It is only in the fuller version of the creed of Nicaea, promulgated by the next ecumenical council, Constantinople I in 381, that Mary is mentioned. Here the relevant sentence runs, 'for us humans and for our salvation he came down from the heavens and became incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, became human . . .'[5] The reason for the inclusion of Mary is unclear. No minutes or other background *acta* of the council survive, nor any account of the creed's composition by any of those who were present at the council. Indeed, the creed appears to have remained virtually unknown for 70 years until it surfaced at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. An impasse was

reached at Chalcedon when the creed of Nicaea seemed to many inadequate to the new situation, and yet there was opposition to making alterations to it especially since the intervening Council of Ephesus of 431 had forbidden any such changes. It was at this point that the archdeacon of Constantinople drew attention to the creed promulgated by the council of 381, which was based on the creed of 325 and therefore could be interpreted as in conformity with Ephesus's prohibition and yet was an improvement on that creed. The council eventually followed the archdeacon's recommendation.[6]

We can only speculate on the reasons for Mary's inclusion. Chalcedon said that the one creed, formed by the two creeds of 325 and 381, 'sets out the Lord's becoming human to those who faithfully accept it' and the creed of 381 was the 'seal' of that of 325.[7] The inclusion of Mary may be seen as part of this seal and of the better setting forth of the Lord's becoming human, and also perhaps a 'catching up' with other creeds of the time which did include Mary. The addition of the Holy Spirit, alongside Mary, in the work of the incarnation is more easily explained in the context of the Pneumatomachian controversy, which reached its peak shortly before the Council of Constantinople in 381. The Pneumatomachi, or 'enemies of the Spirit', were accused of not according full divinity to the Holy Spirit and the much fuller treatment accorded to the Holy Spirit in the creed of 381 was a way of refuting their views.

All Christians, therefore, can be grateful to the archdeacon of Constantinople for his intervention which led to the acceptance of the creed of 381 and its inclusion of Mary. This creed – normally referred to simply as the Nicene Creed though sometimes more precisely as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed – has remained to this day virtually unchanged as the main creed of the main Christian churches: with the one exception of the unfortunate addition by the Western church of the *Filioque* clause. It is a symbol of unity among Christians and also of a common and enduring devotion to Mary.

At the Council of Ephesus in 431 Mary's title of Θεοτόκος, Mother of God or God-bearer, was the central issue. It is not possible to discuss this controversial council in detail here. The controversy was principally christological, the relationship between the divinity and the humanity in Christ, yet the implication for Christians' understanding of and devotion to Mary were profound. The title 'Mother of God' already had a long tradition in the church of Alexandria, certainly extending back to the early fourth century and perhaps earlier to Origen,[8] so that Nestorius's criticism of it seemed an attack upon an ancient tradition and devotion. The acceptance of the title by the leader of the Antiochenes, John of Antioch, in his 'Formula of Union' in 433,[9] two years after the inconclusive end of the council, led to its general

acceptance by Christians, apart from the Nestorian church, and it has formed a cornerstone of devotion to Mary ever since. We may note, too, the declaration of Mary's virginity. In both John of Antioch's Formula of Union and Cyril of Alexandria's letter to John, accepting his Formula, Mary is referred to as the 'virgin' Θεοτόκος.[10]

While christological controversies continued during the next three ecumenical councils – Chalcedon, Constantinople II and III – teaching about Mary did not develop further in them. Mary's title of Mother of God had already stretched theological consensus and maybe this discouraged further developments. Chalcedon is important, however, because it established the canon or list of ecumenical councils: Constantinople I in 381, on account of its creed, was in effect raised to the level of an ecumenical council and the controversial Council of Ephesus was confirmed as ecumenical.[11]

Thereby the teaching of these two councils about Mary became part of the common inheritance of Christianity. Both Constantinople II and III, moreover, confirmed this earlier teaching as well as that of Chalcedon. We may note, too, the introduction of perpetuity into Mary's virginity at Constantinople II, 'the ever virgin Mary, mother of God' (*de sancta Dei genitrice et semper virgine Maria*; the council's decree survives only in a Latin translation).[12] Constantinople III, however, omits the 'ever'.[13]

The second Council of Nicaea in 787, the last council generally recognised as ecumenical by both East and West, saved the artistic heritage of Christianity from the assaults of the iconoclasts. Images of Mary received particular attention in its decree:

> We decree that, like the figure of the honoured and life-giving cross, the revered and holy images, whether painted or made of mosaic or of other suitable material, are to be exposed in the holy churches of God, on sacred instruments and vestments, on walls and panels, in houses and by public ways. These are the images of our Lord, God and saviour, Jesus Christ, and of our Lady without blemish, the holy God-bearer, and of the revered angels and of any of the saintly holy men. The more frequently they are seen in representational art, the more are those who see them drawn to remember and long for those who serve as models, and to pay these images the tribute of salutation and respectful veneration.[14]

The decree went on to distinguish the 'tribute of salutation and respectful veneration' (Greek, ἀσπασμὸν καὶ τιμητικὴν προσκύνησιν) that should

be paid to these images, including therefore those of Mary, from the 'full adoration' (Greek, ἀληθινὴν λατρεῖαν) that should be paid only to the divine nature, and concludes:

> People are drawn to honour these images with the offering of incense and lights, as was piously established by ancient custom. Indeed, the honour paid to an image traverses it, reaching the model; and whoever venerates the image venerates the person represented in that image.[15]

Of Nicaea II's decree, two other points regarding Mary may be noted. First, in the passage just quoted she is referred to as 'our Lady without blemish' (Greek, τῆς ἀχράντου δεσποίνης ἡμῶν), perhaps an anticipation of the doctrine of Mary's immaculate conception. Secondly, the decree in another place returns to the perpetual nature of Mary's virginity: she is called the 'ever virgin Mary' (τῆς . . . ἀειπαρθένου Μαρίας).[16] Finally, it is perhaps fitting to remember that the decisive figure at this council, so important for the preservation of icons and other artistic aspects of devotion to Mary, was another woman, the Empress Irene. As empress and regent of her young son Constantine, she effectively summoned the council, outwitted the iconoclast party at it, presided over the council and directed it in the course it eventually took, then promulgated and enforced its decrees.

When we come to the medieval councils, we are of course in a very different situation. As mentioned earlier, they are not recognised as ecumenical councils by either the Orthodox Church or the churches of the Reformation. Indeed, even within the Western church they seem to have been regarded, at the time, as general councils of the Western church rather than as ecumenical councils. The common belief in the West was that an ecumenical council was impossible without the participation of the Eastern church: the hope was that the Schism between East and West would soon be ended and then another ecumenical council would be possible; beliefs and hopes that we now know were not to be realised.[17] The status of the medieval and later Roman Catholic councils is of great significance from an ecumenical point of view inasmuch as so many issues in dispute between the Roman Catholic Church on the one hand and the Orthodox and Eastern churches and the churches of the Reformation on the other hand hang on statements made by these councils. Are they to be considered as having the same binding authority on Roman Catholics as the first seven councils? This is a vital question that is still debated even within the Roman Catholic Church. For the purposes of this

essay, however, it is not strictly relevant because, with one partial exception, the medieval councils did not issue decrees about Mary.[18]

This absence of teaching about Mary in the medieval councils may seem surprising, especially since the medieval church was later criticised, at the time of the Reformation, for encouraging too much devotion to the saints, Mary included. In fact, we find no such encouragement, or indeed criticism thereof, in these major councils of the Western church. To some extent this may be explained in that these councils mainly concerned themselves with church order rather than with doctrine, reversing the priorities of the councils of the early church, so that teaching about Mary is less to be expected. Devotion to Mary, moreover, seems to have flourished without the need of intervention from the ecclesiastical authorities – perhaps a good sign that this devotion was based on and well in tune with popular religion. Another point, it seems to me, is that Ephesus's declaration of Mary as the mother of God, as well as Nicaea II's defence of images, had provided a sufficiently spacious framework, both doctrinal and iconographical, for much further development to take place without the need of more official definitions. Θεοτόκος was such a strong definition that few wanted to go beyond it, as mentioned earlier. Other doctrines about Mary, such as the immaculate conception or the assumption, could remain open questions that theologians and others might debate legitimately – at least until towards the end of the Middle Ages.

The one partial and perhaps surprising exception to the silence comes from the Council of Basel's definition of the immaculate conception of Mary in 1439. I say 'partial' exception, because the legitimacy of the council at that time was and still is debated. That is to say, there were then two rival councils, both claiming legitimacy. First was the said council at Basel in Switzerland, which had been meeting since 1431, had constantly been at odds with the pope of the day, Eugenius IV, and as a result the majority of its members had refused to accept Eugenius's transfer of the council in 1437 to Florence, where the pope hoped to be more in control. Secondly, there was the council at Florence comprising those who had accepted the pope's transfer. The remaining council at Basel is often regarded as an anti-council because of its opposition to the pope, and it is not usually counted in the Roman Catholic Church's list of ecumenical or general councils, but since it produced the only new teaching about Mary it deserves mention here.

The doctrine of the immaculate conception, the special privilege granted by God to Mary, of being free from original sin and its effects from the moment of her conception, had come to the forefront of theological debate chiefly through its propagation by the Scottish Franciscan friar Duns Scotus

in his teaching at Oxford and Paris universities in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. In the following century the debate had followed largely along the loyalties of the two orders of friars – Franciscans generally following Scotus in support of the doctrine, Dominicans largely opposing it after the example of their great theologian Thomas Aquinas – and it was theologians of the two orders who dominated the debate on the doctrine which began in the council in March 1436. Then the council was still in communion with Pope Eugenius but by the time the council reached its decision in favour of the doctrine, three and a half years later, the rupture with the pope was long a fact. The council's definition read as follows:

> We define and declare that the doctrine according to which the glorious virgin Mary, mother of God, in virtue of a singular grace of the divine will, anticipative and operative, has never been actually subject to original sin, and has always been immune from all original and actual fault, holy and immaculate, should be approved, held and embraced as pious and consonant with the worship of the Church, the Catholic faith, right reason and sacred Scripture; and that henceforth nobody is permitted to preach or teach the contrary.[19]

At the same time the council established Mary's Immaculate Conception as a liturgical feast to be observed by the whole Church on 8 December. Despite the uncertain status of the council, the decree proved the turning point in the fortunes of the doctrine and the papacy soon came round to supporting it, beginning with Pope Sixtus IV's constitution *Cum praeexcelsa* of 1477 and culminating with Pius IX's solemn definition in 1854.[20]

Turning now to the Council of Trent (1545–63), within half a century of the beginning of the Reformation and responding to widespread criticisms about the practice and theology of devotion to the saints in the medieval Church, this council issued, at its final session on 3–4 December 1563, a decree entitled 'On invocation, veneration and relics of the saints and on sacred images'. Mary is mentioned in person once but in general she appears included alongside the other saints rather than exalted separately. Noticeable, moreover, is the decree's apparent attention to the Reformers' criticisms, contrasting with the rather simple anti-Protestant image of the council that has often been given. Thus, while the decree said that 'it is good and beneficial to invoke the saints and to have recourse to their prayers and helpful assistance', this sentence leads to a Christ-centred conclusion, namely that the

purpose of the prayers is 'to obtain blessings from God through his Son our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our sole redeemer and saviour'. And, in a somewhat similar vein, while the decree invoked the second Council of Nicaea's defence of saints' images, it rejected any idea that 'some divinity or power is believed to lie in these images . . . or anything is to be expected from them, or that confidence should be placed in images as was done by the pagans of old . . . but rather the honour shown to images is referred to the original which they represent'.[21]

In its earlier decree on original sin, however, Trent had given individual treatment to Mary, singling her out as exempt from original sin and thereby confirming the doctrine of the immaculate conception. To quote the decree, it said that in its treatment of original sin it did not intend to 'include . . . the blessed and immaculate virgin Mary, mother of God, but rather observance should be given to the constitutions of pope Sixtus IV'. This is obviously a reference to the constitution *Cum praeexcelsa* (1477) in support of the immaculate conception, mentioned above.[22] And, in a similar vein, its decree on justification reads: 'If anyone says that a person can avoid all sins, even venial sins, throughout his or her life – apart from a special privilege from God such as the Church holds in the case of the blessed Virgin – let him be anathema.'[23]

After the Council of Trent, the Roman Catholic Church waited over three centuries before its next general council, Vatican I in 1869–70. Vatican I's chief concern was papal infallibility and it provided directly no further teaching about Mary. Indirectly, however, the council was important because Pope Pius IX's earlier solemn declaration of the doctrine of Mary's immaculate conception, in 1854, seemed to fit clearly into the conditions for infallibility set by Vatican I. Indeed, in the opinion of what might be termed the minimalist party regarding papal infallibility, it was the only doctrine that clearly fitted within these conditions for infallibility. This was reinforced a century later in 1950 when Pope Pius XII declared Mary's assumption into heaven, a solemn definition that clearly invoked the conditions set by the first Vatican Council. Vatican I, therefore, is important because it placed doctrines about Mary – in particular the immaculate conception and the assumption – at the centre of the debate about infallibility. Neither papal infallibility nor these Marian doctrines were accepted widely outside the Roman Catholic Church, while conversely many Roman Catholics tended to link loyalty to the papacy with devotion to these and other doctrines of Mary. In this way Mary unwittingly became a source of tension and even disunity among Christians.

Mary became quite a focus of attention at the next and last council to be considered, the second Vatican council in 1962–65. The decade or so before

the beginning of the council had been a time of heightened interest in Mary in the Roman Catholic Church. There had been the declaration in 1950 by Pope Pius XII of Mary's assumption into heaven, as mentioned, and there was pressure for further titles and doctrines about Mary, notably Mary as the mother of the Church and Mary as mediatrix of all graces. At the devotional level, too, this interest was manifested in, for example, the continuing popularity of various Marian shrines, notably Lourdes in France and Fatima in Portugal, as well as a continuing expansion in the number and size of institutions and activities under the patronage of Mary.

Initially the proposal at the council was that there should be a separate decree on Mary and, indeed, such a decree was drafted by the preparatory commission of the council. However, the separate nature of this decree, as well as its contents, became a source of division between the conservative minority and the progressive majority at the council. (Using the labels 'conservatives' and 'progressives' is something of an oversimplification, but certainly these were the two basic groupings at the council. For the sake of convenience, I shall henceforth call the conservative party the 'A's and the progressives the 'B's.) Most of the 'A's wanted this separate decree on Mary: many of them wanted it to include Mary's title of Mother of the Church, and some also that of mediatrix of all graces. Most though not all the leaders of the 'B's, on the other hand, argued that Mary should be seen as a model and archetype of the Church, not separate from it, and therefore the treatment of Mary would be much better as part of the decree on the Church rather than in a separate decree, especially since the decree on the Church (usually referred to by its opening words *Lumen Gentium*), was meant to be the most important document of the whole council. Most 'B's, moreover, were against the declaration of any further titles for Mary as being of doubtful theological validity, or at least open to misunderstanding, and as detrimental to ecumenical relations with other Christian churches – an aspect of the council that was becoming increasingly important.

Sometimes the division has been portrayed as one between Marian maximalists, the 'A's, and minimalists, the 'B's. But this is misleading, because the difference of opinion concerned the nature of Mary's role: a debate about quality not quantity, if you like. To cut a long story short, the 'B's gained the support of the majority. Mary was not accorded a separate decree: rather the eighth and last chapter of the decree on the Church was dedicated to her, and the debated titles of Mother of the Church and mediatrix of all graces were not mentioned in the chapter: though significantly Pope Paul VI referred to Mary as Mother of the Church in his concluding address to the council at

the end of the session in which the decree was approved; and there is a more general reference to Mary as mediatrix as follows:

> The blessed Virgin is invoked in the church under the titles of advocate, helper, benefactress and mediatrix. This, however, must be understood in such a way that it takes away nothing from the dignity and power of Christ the one mediator, and adds nothing on to this.[24]

On the other hand, it is a full chapter, the longest of the eight chapters into which the decree is divided, and constitutes the longest and most comprehensive treatment of Mary in any of the councils we have been looking at. There is, too, a genuine attempt to include some of the theological and devotional riches of the Eastern churches regarding Mary as well as the proper cautions of the churches of the Reformation. The chapter is entitled 'The blessed Virgin Mary, mother of God, in the mystery of Christ and the Church', and the headings of the five sections into which the chapter is divided give some further idea of the contents: 1. Introduction. 2. The role of the blessed Virgin in the economy of salvation. 3. The blessed Virgin and the Church. 4. The cult of the blessed Virgin in the Church. 5. Mary, the sign of sure hope and comfort for the pilgrim people of God.[25]

This essay has traversed a long period of time, from the fourth to the twentieth centuries and councils are, of course, only a limited aspect of the Church's history and teaching. In a sense they are better seen as special moments in the Church's history rather than as forming an institution with a continuous history. Even in the first millennium AD, before the schism between East and West, much of the interest in Mary, both theological and devotional, was not reflected in the ecumenical councils. After the schism this essay has considered the tradition of the Western church and then of the Roman Catholic Church, so that we have been missing the contributions of other Christian churches. Still, we have accompanied one group of sailors throughout the voyage, so to speak, and it may be consoling to think that the fullest and most ecumenically sensitive treatment of Mary in all the councils we have been considering came in the Roman Catholic Church's most recent general council, Vatican II: a council of our own time.

The Historiography of Vatican II in the Anglophone World

The term 'anglophone world' was once almost thought of as synonymous with the 'Anglo-Saxon' world or zone, but today the linkage between 'English-speaking' and 'Anglo-Saxon' has little resonance, particularly within the English-speaking world itself. One should not swallow too quickly President Charles de Gaulle's conviction of Anglo-Saxon unity! Of course, there are countries whose main language of communication is English but today especially they are very varied and many of them would not wish to be associated closely with Britain or the USA. I think most obviously of India and the anglophone countries in Africa. Even within the USA, of course, there are many cultures and intellectual traditions: the so-called Anglo-Saxon approach is only one among many and much less dominant now than it used to be. So, the expressions 'Anglo-Saxon', 'anglophone' or 'English-speaking' are used here for the sake of convenience and not to imply that the majority of anglophone countries share an Anglo-Saxon-centric view of the world.

Knowledge of Vatican II has come to us in three stages.

First, what was communicated during the four years of the Council itself: pre-eminently the 16 decrees promulgated by the Council but also the accounts of contemporaries, both bishops and theologians who had official positions in the Council and other interested parties.

Regarding publication of the 16 decrees in the English-speaking world, of most significance was the remarkably quick appearance of an English translation. In 1966, within a few months of the end of the Council, there appeared *The Documents of Vatican II*, edited by Walter Abbott, a Jesuit from North America (USA). 'Abbott', as the book soon came to be known, contained an English translation of all 16 decrees – the translation was largely the work of Monsignor J. Gallagher, a North American diocesan priest – and,

in addition, some explanatory footnotes, a short introduction to each decree and a short reflection thereon: the introductions by Catholic theologians and the reflections mainly by Christians of other churches. The book was published in paperback by Geoffrey Chapman of London and in New York, jointly by Guild Press, Herder and Herder, and Association Press. In England it was priced at seven shillings and sixpence in the old English money (about 50 euro cents in current European money). At this low price it sold in large quantities and was undoubtedly a major reason for the extensive and generally favourable reception of the Council in the anglophone world.

Among other English translations mention should be made of that published by the Irish Dominicans, headed by Austin Flannery OP, which first appeared in 1975 under the title *Vatican Council: the conciliar and post conciliar documents* (Dublin, Dominican Publications) and has subsequently been reprinted many times with some revisions and small variations in the title. It, too, was published in paperback, at an affordable price, and has sold well over the years right down to the present. I also make bold to mention the translation made by my English Jesuit confrères in volume 2 of *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (London and Washington USA: Sheed & Ward and Georgetown University Press, 1990), of which I was the general editor.

Certainly both knowledge of and interest in the Council's decrees have been plentiful in the English-speaking world and the affordable translations, especially 'Abbott' and 'Flannery', have made it possible for the decrees to be read in private and to be studied by people in groups, the latter activity being especially popular in the years immediately after the Council. This, at least, is my impression.

As for contemporary accounts of the Council, first mention must go to the reports of the Redemptorist priest, Francis Xavier Murphy, which were published regularly in the North American weekly *The New Yorker*. Murphy's reporting was, strictly speaking, in breach of the Council's rules of secrecy and he published under the pseudonym of Xavier Rynne: his true identity only became known some years after the Council. At the end of each session of the Council, moreover, an expanded version of his reports was published in book form, ultimately in four volumes with the titles *Letters from Vatican City, The Second Session, The Third Session, The Fourth Session* (London and New York, Faber and Faber, 1962–66); the work was translated into several other languages. Catholic newspapers, such as the three main Catholic weeklies in England: *The Tablet*, *The Catholic Herald* and *The Catholic Universe* carried regular reports, especially as the Council developed. But it was Xavier Rynne's reports that most caught the attention, partly because of his careful

summaries of the speeches made in the Council debates, partly because he gained the confidence of many bishops and seemed to be able to express what was going on from inside, partly because the wide and largely secular readership of *The New Yorker* meant that news of the Council reached well beyond Catholic circles, and partly because he fitted into the long tradition of journalism in the Anglo-Saxon world.

The reporting of journalists raised important questions about the nature of the Council. In a sense the Council was created, not just reported, by journalists, at least in the anglophone world. This raises the question of whether the significance of the Council can be limited to the decrees it promulgated, or whether the Council as an event must also be taken into account. One has some sympathy with Archbishop Felici, Secretary-general of the Council, who tried to keep journalists at bay, to prevent them taking over the Council.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that journalists brought the Council alive to a wide audience both within and beyond the Catholic Church. The reporting of Xavier Rynne in *The New Yorker*, who is the only English-speaking journalist I have looked at closely, mainly through the four volumes, seems well informed, balanced on the whole and sympathetic towards the Church. His writing does, however, have a tendency to look at issues through Anglo-Saxon eyes and interests, perhaps demanded by the editors of *The New Yorker*. Thus, the Council is regarded somewhat after the model of the British Parliament or the American Congress. There is much interest in parties and personalities and in freedom of expression. The decrees and issues that loomed large in the anglophone world loom large in the reporting: religious freedom and ecumenism, for example. Issues of less concern feature less prominently: relations between Church and state, for example. However, the reporting was basically determined by what was discussed each day in the Council and this imposed a format of truthfulness and prevented journalists from going to extremes in their interpretation.

Certainly the role of journalists in the reporting and reception of the Council seems to me to merit much more research. To what extent did journalists create national, or language-based, interpretations of the Council? To what extent did the fathers of the Council – at least in the English-speaking world, where knowledge of Latin was often weak – depend more upon journalists' reports for their understanding of what was going on in the Council than upon the speeches that were delivered in Latin in the *aula*?

The second stage of understanding Vatican II, it seems to me, has been principally through commentaries on the conciliar decrees. There have been a number of excellent commentaries in English on individual decrees, especially

in the years immediately after the Council. For example, Bernard Leeming SJ's commentary on the decree on ecumenism, *The Vatican Council and Christian Unity: A Commentary on the Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council, with a Translation of the Text* (London, Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 1966), or John Courtenay Murray's writings on the decree on religious freedom. (Murray himself was a major architect of the decree at the Council.) One notices again that anglophone commentators tended to concentrate on the decrees that were particularly relevant to the Anglo-Saxon scene.

There have not been, however, so far as I am aware, any major anglophone commentaries on all the decrees. Perhaps this is not surprising inasmuch as there were no anglophones at the very centre of the Council, none among the key figures, both bishops and theologians, mostly from north-western Continental Europe and Italy, who dominated the first two years of the Council. The Anglo-Saxon world did not have the same preparation for the Council, and as a result neither the same overall grasp of what was going on in the Council, nor perhaps the same overall interest in it, at least in the early stages, especially regarding more strictly theological issues, as was to be found in continental Europe, the motor of the Council. Maybe, more simply, Anglo-Saxons are less capable of overarching syntheses than their Continental brethren!

Still, the anglophones were quick to profit from the work of others. Perhaps the most important early commentary on all the decrees, that edited by Herbert Vorgrimler as a three-volume appendix to the second edition of *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (Freiburg im Breisgau, Herder, 1966–68) was immediately translated into English in five volumes as *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (London, Burns & Oates/New York, Herder and Herder, 1967–69). The success of this work may well have deterred other attempts at a full-scale commentary in the English-speaking world. The other two early major commentaries were not translated into English, so far as I am aware: *Magistero Conciliare*, a cura di A. Favale, 14 voll. (Torino, Elle Di Ci, 1966–69); and *Vatican II: textes et commentaires des décrets conciliaires*, edited by Y. Congar, collection *Unam sanctam*, 18 vols (Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1966–70).

The more recent major commentary – perhaps 'assessment' is a better word – also came from outside the English-speaking world but it too was immediately translated into English: the three volumes edited by Professor René Latourelle, the French-Canadian Jesuit and former dean of the Theology faculty of the Gregorian University, Rome, which was translated into English as *Vatican II, Assessment and Perspectives Twenty-five Years After, 1962–1987*

(New York – Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1988–89). There were nine anglophones among the 57 contributors to these volumes, according to my counting, whereas Vorgrimler's commentary 20 years earlier was written overwhelmingly by German-speakers and there were no anglophone contributors.

It is also true that the major documents of the Council, not just what might be called the secondary decrees, those on ecumenism and religious freedom, for example, soon entered the mainstream of theological writing and reflection in the anglophone world: even if Anglo-Saxons were not present in force in the formative stages of these decrees. One may think, for example, of the writings of Avery Dulles on ecclesiology, profoundly influenced by *Lumen Gentium*, or the massive development of biblical scholarship in the anglophone world, greatly encouraged by *Dei Verbum* and perhaps best epitomised by the scholarship and huge sales of the North American based *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, which was first published in 1968. Joseph Fitzmyer, one of its three editors, told me that over 150,000 copies had been sold shortly before it entered a second edition in the late 1980s.

The third stage in our understanding of Vatican II has seen a return to the history of the Council, something of a move away from the study of the decrees that were promulgated. Partly this is straightforward historical interest, but it also raises again the ecclesiological issue of whether the significance of a Council can be limited to its decrees, whether the 'event' of the Council is not also constitutive of it. The Council as an event has recently been addressed in *L'evento e le decisioni. Studi sulle dinamiche del concilio Vaticano II*, a cura di M. T. Fattori e A. Melloni (Bologna, Il Mulino, 1997).

In this third stage, anglophone scholars have again been participants rather than leaders: perhaps the empirical Anglo-Saxon mentality is too cautious to lead a new intellectual fashion. The groundwork that has made this third stage possible has been accomplished largely outside the anglophone zone. One thinks first of the work of editing *Acta Synodalia*, which has been accomplished in Rome under the supervision of archbishop (later cardinal) Felici, Secretary-general of the Council, and later under monsignor Carbone. Without this monumental work, now nearing completion, a scientific history of the Council would be impossible. Secondly, one thinks of the various institutes and centres for the study of the Council, which among other initiatives, have done much to collect the diaries and other personal papers of the participants: records that fill out greatly the background and history of the Council. One such institute is the Catholic University of America in Washington, directed by Professor Joseph Komonchak. The others that I am aware of lie outside the anglophone world: in Quebec City in Canada under

the direction of Professor Gilles Routhier, in São Paolo in Brazil, 'Centrum voor Conciliestudie Vaticanum II' at Leuven and 'Centre Lumen Gentium' at Louvain-la-Neuve, both in Belgium, 'Istituto per le scienze religiose' in Bologna, Italy, and most recently the 'Centro Studi e Ricerche sul Concilio Vaticano II' at the Lateran University, Rome.

The most interesting of these collections of personal papers come largely from the countries of continental Europe that provided the key figures in the Council, therefore outside the anglophone zone. This year the publication of the diary of Yves Congar OP is awaited with both interest and some trepidation. However, more attention is rightly being focused on countries outside continental Europe: the journal of Helder Camara, archbishop of Recife in Brazil, edited by L.C. Marques, 'O carteggio conciliare di Mons. Helder Pessoa Camara' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Bologna, 1998), is a good example. English-speaking participants have also yielded some significant fruits. One example is the account of the journal kept during the Council by monsignor Dereck Worlock, then the young secretary and *peritus* of the cardinal archbishop of Westminster and later to become himself the archbishop of Liverpool, *The Worlock Archive* (London and New York, Geoffrey Chapman, 2000), edited by Clifford Longley, chapter 2. Hopefully the journal itself will soon be published. Informative, too, in a slightly different genre, have been the reminiscences, some 20 years after the Council, of mainly anglophone participants which were collected and edited by the English Benedictine monk Alberic Stacpoole, *Vatican II by Those who Were There* (London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1986). We may note too the perceptive observations of some Anglican observers at the Council, the most notable being the account published shortly after the Council by John Moorman, bishop of Ripon, *Vatican Observed* (London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967).

A major event in this third state has been the publication of *Storia del concilio Vaticano II*, under the general editorship of Professor Alberigo of the 'Istituto per le scienze religiose' in Bologna and published by Il Mulino of the same city. The first volume was published in 1995 and the last of the projected five volumes appeared recently. Translations into five languages are under way: English, French, German, Spanish and Portuguese/Brazilian. The English translation is the furthest ahead, almost abreast of the Italian original, and has sold very well, showing the enduring interest in the Council in the anglophone world: three volumes have been published and vol. 4 is due later this year, *History of Vatican II* (Leuven, Peeters – USA, Orbis 1996–). Although the writing and editing is Italian-led, there has been a significant anglophone contribution. Most prominently, Joseph Komonchak of the USA

has written long chapters in several volumes as well as being the general editor of the English edition, jointly with Professor Alberigo. Several other English-speakers are to be found among the 30 or so authors of the work.

Alberigo's *Storia del concilio Vaticano II* has revealed the struggle for the memory of the Council that is now underway. Each time a volume is published, there quickly appears a long and hostile review of it in *L'Osservatore Romano*, in most cases by an archbishop of the Secretariat of State. Nor are the anglophone writers spared in his criticisms, though on the whole they have not found themselves at the centre of the battle. Elsewhere the reception of the work has been generally favourable. After the debates over the interpretation of the decrees, attention now seems to be turning to discussion of the Council as an event.

What about the future? I am no prophet but I think attention could profitably be focused on the reception of the Council. I do not wish to suggest that the meaning of the decrees depends upon their subsequent reception by the Church; yet this reception, in the years and decades after the Council, is worthy of historical research in its own right and can help the Church in its own self-understanding. I have already said that I think the work of journalists, both at the time of the Council and afterwards, merits much more attention. I also think that more research needs to be done on the countries that do not appear, at first sight, to have been at the centre of the Council and this will include many anglophone countries. That is to say, most of the research so far has focused on bishops and theologians from Europe. But it now seems clear, and my own researches into the third year of the Council support the point, that especially in the last two years of the Council the bishops from outside Europe gained more and more in confidence and determined the outcome. How this happened, and with what results after the Council, certainly merit further study. The best recent guide to current research in this direction are the essays contained in *Experience, Organisations and Bodies at Vatican II: Proceedings of the Bologna Conference 1996,* edited by M.T. Fattori and A. Melloni (Leuven, Bibliotheek van de Faculteit Godgeleerdheid, 1999), which examine the contributions of the following countries: Brazil, Uruguay, China, India, Japan, Argentina and South Africa.

I end by saying, as a relative newcomer to Vatican II studies, that the research and debate seem to me both important and healthy for the Church. Scholars, moreover, seem to be providing their own *magisterilim* in the debate: with suitable forums, ideas can be suitably expounded and either proven or rejected.

Ecumenism and the Ecumenical Councils[1]

I would like to share some reflections on the ecumenical councils and ecumenism: how the ecumenical and general councils of the Church[2] can help us in our endeavours for church unity today. I am not proposing to work through the history of these assemblies, but rather to offer some thoughts on their relevance to ecumenism today. The reflections come as the fruits of my work on these councils, first in editing the English version of their decrees[3] and subsequently in teaching and writing further about them, most recently in a short history.[4]

There are eight reflections. Most of them are encouraging, so I will begin with the one that may appear the most negative though even this, if properly understood, can lift our spirits.

1. Imperfect Union as the Norm and an Ideal

Divisions in the Church, or at least differences, have always been the norm. The councils show this clearly. Any notion that the Church has ever been fully united, except perhaps for an hour after Pentecost, is a dangerous myth.

We sometimes speak of the first seven ecumenical councils, from Nicaea I in 325 to Nicaea II in 787, as the seven councils of the undivided church inasmuch as they took place before the most fundamental of all schisms, that between the churches of East and West beginning in the eleventh century.[5] Yet there were major splits and schisms before that time: Arius and his sympathisers rejected Nicaea I, Nestorian churches broke away after Ephesus, various Monophysite churches after Chalcedon – the most important being the Coptic church in Egypt – and many other smaller divisions occurred.[6]

Even within the churches that remained in fundamental communion during this first millennium, there were tensions and schisms: periods of formal schism between the Eastern and Western churches, notably while Acacius (471–89) and Photius (858–92) were patriarchs of Constantinople; the persistence of Arianism within the Western church until the ninth century; and many other difficulties. Indeed, especially in proportion to the numbers of Christians – under a hundred million for the first millennium, over a billion today – the Church appears at least as quarrelsome during its first millennium as during the second. For strong language it is hard to rival the exchanges between theologians of Alexandria and of Antioch around the time of the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon or that in Photius's encyclical letter of 867 denouncing the bishop of Rome and portraying Westerners as 'savage beasts'.

The fact of this permanent tension within the Christian people in the past forces us to reflect on what kind of unity we should be seeking today. We have Christ's prayer that his followers may be one as he and the Father are one (John 17.11 and 20–23) and we must strive for the fulfilment of this prayer. On the other hand, we should not assume too quickly that we know what this desired union represents in this life. The New Testament, with its pluralism of approaches, suggests a certain diversity rather than tight uniformity as the ideal. We should not be so obsessed with the goal of full organic unity that we live in permanent discouragement or become forgetful of intermediate steps and medium-term opportunities. Full organic unity is most unlikely ever to arrive in this life. Partial or imperfect union, on the other hand, has been the norm throughout the Church's history and in many ways has proved healthy: through debates and struggles, within a common Christian framework, growth and development in the Church have been possible. In this sense it is an ideal as well as the norm.

2. Amazing Nature of Existing Unity

While we work to heal existing divisions, we should ponder the remarkable nature of the unity that has endured. The unity is amazing on account of the greatness of the mystery and the frailty of us carriers of it. Our human limitations need no elaboration but we need to remind ourselves continually of the wonder and depth of the Christian mystery, revealed sublimely in the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. We may ask why more people do not become Christians and why Christians cannot remain more united, yet the mystery of Christianity is so deep that the miracles are that anyone believes and that Christians have remained as united as they have! Other

world religions, with simpler and less demanding claims, find it hard enough to remain united; indeed they are probably more divided than Christianity. As long as Christianity retains its very exalted claims and challenges, unity among Christians will always remain a miracle of grace and of the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, we need to rely more upon the Holy Spirit in our ecumenical endeavours. Perhaps we see restored unity too much in terms of our own efforts and strategies, putting broken pieces back together again through our own ingenuity. We may think too much of human solutions. It is the Holy Spirit who has preserved unity in the Church in the past – against all the odds, against all human expectations, one may say, in view of the depth of the mystery and the extent of our human frailty – so we trust She will find ways forward in the future: ways and at times that the Spirit wills.

The ecumenical councils are perhaps the most striking example of this supernatural action. In them we see, *par excellence*, the Holy Spirit guiding the Church and preserving as much unity as was possible. Our role, then, is to listen to the Spirit and to cooperate with her promptings rather than to rely too much upon our own plans.

3. Our Remarkable Conciliar Tradition

As well as the remarkable nature of existing unity among Christians, our conciliar tradition deserves attention. The 21 ecumenical and general councils, from Nicaea I in 325 to Vatican II in 1962–65, form the most notable series of assemblies in the history of the world. No other institution or body has a comparable record. In comparison with, for example, the Parliament of Britain or the Althing of Iceland, probably the oldest national assemblies with an institutional continuity in the Western world, the councils of the Church yield a much longer history: the earliest Parliament is usually dated to 1257 and the first Althing to 930, whereas Nicaea goes back to 325. In size and organisation, too, they were very remarkable: some 250–300 bishops assembled at Nicaea I, 500–600 at Chalcedon in 451. Large councils were held in the medieval west from Lateran III to Basel-Florence, and Trent held together for 18 years amidst many difficulties. In more recent times, 2,400 bishops from all over the world took part in Vatican II – as well as accompanying theologians, journalists, observers and others – and persevered in their work for four years.

No other religion, moreover, can show a comparable record: Christianity alone has sought to update itself continuously through such a series of world gatherings. Roman Catholics can be especially grateful for this conciliar

tradition. Despite human failings and sinfulness, the Roman Catholic Church has preserved the mainstream of conciliar tradition after the sad schisms with the Eastern church in the eleventh century and with the churches of the Reformation in the sixteenth. It has remained the largest Christian church and in this and other ways has preserved the mainstream of Christianity; no other Christian church has a continuous conciliar tradition of comparable importance.

These councils are especially remarkable in view of the difficulty of their business. It is hard enough for a national assembly or the United Nations to agree on concrete issues such as taxation or international law. Far more difficult is it to reach agreement on the mysteries of religious faith, which transcend this world and touch the divine, or to update this faith into contemporary language: especially for Christianity in view of the exalted nature of its claims. For a national assembly, moreover, a majority vote is usually sufficient to pass a law, while unanimity, or virtual unanimity, has traditionally been required for doctrinal statements in ecumenical councils.[7] Such consensus on such difficult matters is indeed another miracle of grace and of the Holy Spirit.

It is important for Christians to appreciate their conciliar tradition. Unfortunately it has fallen under something of a cloud for Roman Catholics, beginning in the fifteenth century with the struggle for supremacy between the councils of Constance and Basel and a succession of popes, and continuing with the emphasis on the papacy in the Counter-Reformation and later periods. The whole tradition has been compromised in the eyes of some Catholics, seen as a rival and threat to papal teaching and as a result has been marginalised. This is foolish and unnecessary since in principle there should be no conflict between the two institutions, rather mutual corroboration. For other churches, moreover, the medieval and later general councils are seen as irredeemably Roman Catholic and therefore are largely rejected. As a result, with a truncated conciliar history, interrupted after the second Council of Nicaea in 787, there is much less interest among these churches in a living and continuous conciliar tradition. This too is a pity, and may be partly resolved by the more ecumenical and relaxed approach to the councils after Nicaea II that will be suggested in the sixth reflection.

4. Is the Church too Asian?

This fourth reflection is put in the form of a provocative question and it moves beyond ecumenism between Christian churches into inter-religious

dialogue.[8] The starting point is the criticism, often heard today, that the church, especially the Catholic Church, is too Western. As a result, its theology and discipline are rejected by the younger churches of the emerging Christian world – in Africa, Asia and Latin America – as the outdated colonial impositions of a once dominant but now decadent church.

My suggestion is that during the first seven councils, from Nicaea I to Nicaea II in 787, the complaint would probably have been the opposite: that the church was too Asian, too dominated by the thought and lifestyles of the East. The point emerges from an examination of the arrangements and membership of these early councils.

All of them were held in the East, in modern Turkey: four of them in Asia – Nicaea I and II, Ephesus and Chalcedon – and while Constantinople, the site of the other three, lies just within Europe, being on the western side of the Bosphorus straits, the traditional dividing line between Asia and Europe, it was considered very much a city of the East, the capital of the eastern Empire. All of them, moreover, were summoned and presided over, either directly or through their officials, and their decrees promulgated, by the eastern emperor of the day or, effectively, in the cases of Chalcedon and Nicaea II, by the empresses Pulcheria and Irene.

In addition to the presiding emperor or empress or officials, the large majority of participants at these councils were from the East. At Nicaea I only half a dozen participants, including the two papal legates, are known to have come from the Western church; all the other 300 or so were bishops of sees in the eastern Empire (including Egypt and the Greek-speaking part of North Africa). At Constantinople I in 381 all were from the East. At the next five councils – Ephesus, Chalcedon, Constantinople II and III, Nicaea II – the Western church was represented by papal legates and a few other bishops but again the overwhelming majority of members were from the East.

The language of the councils and their decrees was that of the eastern Empire, Greek, and the preoccupations and initiatives were predominantly eastern. Arius, Nestorius and Eutyches all came from the East: the controversies about the Trinity and the divinity and humanity of Christ, which dominated the first six councils, as well as the issue of iconoclasm at Nicaea II, were largely debates within the Eastern church. The canons relating to church order that were promulgated by these councils, notably those of Nicaea I and Trullo in 692 (if we may include the latter, according to the tradition of the Eastern church, as the 'Quinisext' council, the disciplinary conclusions to the fifth and sixth councils of Constantinople II and III), had mainly in mind the circumstances of the eastern churches. The initiatives at these councils

came principally from the sees of Alexandria, Antioch and Constantinople. The contribution of Ossius of Cordoba at Nicaea I is disputed: otherwise the major contribution from the Western Church was the 'Tome' of Pope Leo at Chalcedon.

You will have noticed that I have been speaking more of the East than of Asia. Much of the eastern Empire, it is true, lay in Europe – principally Greece and the Balkans – and Africa rather than in Asia. All three, moreover, were known then as separate continents; they are not just modern constructs. On the other hand, the divide between the western half of the Roman Empire, centred on Rome, and the eastern half, with its capital of Constantinople, following the linguistic boundaries of Latin and Greek, was more significant and fundamental than the divisions of the three continents. The Greek-speaking parts of the empire in Europe were closer to Asia than they were to Western Europe. Most of Turkey, the location of all seven councils and the region that played the most decisive role of all, lay within Asia. It might be added as a footnote that Alexandria was considered by some – Hecataeus, for example, the Greek geographer in his map around 500 BC; though not, I think, by Herodotus, the 'Father' of Geography – to be part of Asia rather than Africa on the grounds that the boundary between the two continents lay along the Nile and its delta rather than further east.

This delicate question of the allegiance of the eastern, Greek-speaking part of Europe, involves the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. Their enormous influence upon Christian theology – especially of Plato for the early councils – is not in doubt. What needs questioning is whether they should be identified with Western Europe as intimately as they usually are. They, and ancient Greek thought more generally, it seems to me, have been hijacked into the European chariot whereas in fact they belong as much if not more to Asia. Europe, notably Western Europe, has been desperate to find its intellectual roots and especially secular elements, which dislike much emphasis upon Europe's Christian roots, have discovered them in classical Greek thought. However, this intellectual world was much more in touch with Asian and Egyptian thought and religion than with the intellectually undeveloped West: much closer, if you like, to Persia and the Indus valley than to Gaul, Britannia or Germania. The surprise is that Asia and North Africa have not challenged more Europe's stake in the ancient Greek world and rightly laid claim to what belongs at least partly to them. This realigning of Greek thought in an Asian direction finds support from various recent scholars, notably M.L. West and W. Burkert.[9] My point, for the purposes of Christian ecumenism and of inter-religious dialogue, is that the early ecumenical

councils reveal the roots of the Roman Catholic Church as much more Asian and African, less Western and European, than is usually portrayed. The effects of this broad base, moreover, have remained with Catholicism ever since. Christians outside Europe, therefore, as well as other world religions, whose origins and development come largely from Asia, can see the Catholic Church as a friend and fellow-traveller, with many common roots, rather than as an alien body that needs to be rejected.

5. Formula *versus* Content

Accompanying the opposition to the Catholic Church and its theology as too Western and European has been the argument that the early councils imposed upon the universal Church a set of doctrinal formulas that were typically tight, analytic and abstract in the Western manner and have acted as a straightjacket upon Christianity ever since. It is a variation upon Adolph Harnack's lament of the evil effects of Hellenisation upon the Church. One reaction has been to reject outright these doctrinal formulas. A second and more subtle response has been to urge Christians to concentrate upon the general content of the creeds and other doctrinal statements of the early councils, where freedom may be found, without paying much attention to the precise formulas in which the doctrines were expressed. Is such a distinction between formula and content right?

I have already replied to one aspect of this question by suggesting that Greek thought was closer to Asia than to Western Europe. Now I would like to make a second point, that the doctrinal formulas of the councils are not tight and rigid, rather there is considerable space and flexibility within them. They are signposts pointing to spacious fields and warning of false trails rather than policemen with batons herding people into confined pens. The content of thought, moreover, cannot be divorced from the way in which it is expressed – there is no thought without some expression – and in this sense the content of faith cannot be divorced from its formulas. In view of the flexibility and elasticity within the doctrinal statements of the councils, it is much wiser, it seems to me, to accept and find the space within them than sharply to contest or reject them.

Two points support this argument. First, the Greek language. One only has to look up in a dictionary three words that Christians eventually settled upon in expressing the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation to see how elastic these words are: οὐσία (ousia) for 'being' as in the one being of God, ὑπόστασις (hupostasis) for 'person' as in the three persons of the Trinity, and

φύσις (phusis) for 'nature' as in the human and divine natures of Christ. The meanings of ὑπόστασις (hupostasis), according to Liddell & Scott's standard Greek-English dictionary, are as follows: standing under, supporting, sediment, jelly or thick soup, duration, coming into existence, origin, foundation, substructure, argument, confidence, courage, resolution, steadiness, promise, substantial nature, substantial existence, reality, wealth, property, and various others! A similarly broad range of meanings will be found under οὐσία (ousia) and φύσις (phusis). There is, too, much overlap in the meanings of the three words. To regard them as expressing rigidly defined concepts is manifestly wrong: there is plenty of space within them to accommodate most theological approaches.

Secondly, the principle of unanimity. Ecumenical councils are not like the British Parliament or most national assemblies where a majority of one is sufficient to pass a law. In them, rather, unanimous consent, or virtual unanimity, has traditionally been required for approval. At Nicaea I all but two bishops eventually agreed to the creed and the principle of unanimity subsequently remained in force even if it often proved difficult to achieve. It continued as the norm during the medieval councils and was acknowledged as such at Trent and Vatican I and II. As a result, especially in doctrinal statements, formulas had to be found that were sufficiently elastic to accommodate the views of all, or almost all, sections of opinion. This was helped in the early councils by the fluidity of the Greek language, as mentioned. In the Nicene Creed, for example, the crucial word ὁμοούσιος (homoousios, of the same being), to express the Son's relationship with the Father, could be interpreted in different ways. Later, as a more specifically Christian vocabulary was developed in Latin, the same point was met by finding elasticity in sentences, paragraphs or whole decrees rather than in single words. For example, the crucial penultimate paragraph of Vatican I's decree on papal infallibility, which defined infallibility, contained various qualifications to appease those opposed to the definition; and many of Vatican II's decrees may be described as patchwork quilts, which try to accommodate most shades of opinion roughly in proportion to their strengths among the members of the council.

The implications for ecumenism are encouraging. Catholics can rest more secure with their traditional formulas and find within them plenty of room for present and future exploration. Other Christians generally share with Catholics the formulas of the first seven ecumenical councils: they may be surprised at how much common ground they can find in later councils. Adherents of other religions may find more points of contact with Christians than of difference.

6. Status of Councils after 1054?

What is the status of the councils that have for long been recognised as ecumenical by the Roman Catholic Church and took place after the beginning of the schism between East and West in 1054? This question is of great significance for ecumenism since almost all the points in dispute between the Roman Catholic Church on the one hand, and the Orthodox Church and the churches of the Reformation on the other, depend on statements made by these later councils.

They are, obviously, not recognised as ecumenical by either the Orthodox Church or the churches of the Reformation. By the former because it was not represented in any proper sense at them; by the latter partly for the same reason of the absence of the Eastern church and partly because they consider the Church, at least the Western church and therefore its councils, as being in a state of radical error during the Middle Ages and the Roman Catholic Church as continuing in this state of error during the Counter-Reformation and afterwards.

What is the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church to the status of these later councils? The answer is not simple. Medieval people in Western Christendom were themselves uncertain about the status of their own councils and the weight of opinion seems to have been that they were not ecumenical. The point is made rather clearly by the profession of faith that the Council of Constance in 1417 required of a future pope. In listing the councils that the pope should respect, the profession drew a distinction between the eight 'universal/ecumenical' (Latin, *universalia*) councils from Nicaea I to Constantinople IV and the 'general' (Latin, *generalia*) councils (of the Middle Ages) 'at the Lateran, Lyons and Vienne'.[10] The distinction is not expanded upon but it is evident that some difference in status was intended. Other evidence showing that most of the medieval councils were not then regarded as ecumenical has been summarised by Victor Peri and Luis Bermejo.[11] In particular, the Council of Florence (1438–45), at which the Eastern church was represented and a form of reunion reached, was often referred to in the West, including by popes and their legates, as the eighth or ninth ecumenical council; that is, coming immediately after Nicaea II or Constantinople IV and excluding the earlier medieval councils. It was thought impossible to have an ecumenical council without the participation of the Eastern church, as was the case in the medieval councils before Florence.

The attempt to promote the medieval councils to ecumenical status came about during the Counter-Reformation. Roman Catholic apologists

sought to defend the true Church as they saw it against the attacks of the Reformation by an appeal to its medieval heritage and the medieval councils formed an important part of this heritage. Cardinals Robert Bellarmine, the Jesuit theologian, and Cesare Baronius, the Oratorian scholar, were influential in this development and so too was the publication in four volumes in 1608–12 of the so-called 'Roman edition' of the councils.[12] This edition, compiled by scholars in Rome including Robert Bellarmine and working under the auspices of pope Paul V, sought to decide which councils were to be counted in the list of ecumenical councils.[13] In addition to the eight councils before the East–West schism, Nicaea I to Constantinople IV, it included the ten medieval councils (Lateran I in 1123 to Lateran V in 1512–17) and Trent. The list came to be widely accepted within the Roman Catholic Church though it was never defined in an authoritative way.

The issue was reopened in recent times. The year 1974 saw two important contributions. First, the influential Dominican theologian Yves Congar wrote a wide-ranging article on criteria for ecumenicity in councils, in which he questioned the list of 21 ecumenical councils (19 from Nicaea I to Trent plus Vatican I and II) that had become traditional within the Catholic Church.[14] Second, as part of the celebrations of the seventh centenary of the second Council of Lyons in 1274, pope Paul VI wrote a letter to Cardinal Willebrands, president of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, in which he referred to Lyons II and the other medieval councils as 'general councils of the West' (*generales synodos in occidentali orbe*) rather than as ecumenical councils, a choice of language that appears intentional.[15] Since 1974 there has been some discussion of the issue though not as much as might be expected in view of its possible fruitfulness. There has been a general tendency even within the Roman Catholic communion to follow the lead of Paul VI and call the medieval councils 'general councils of the Western church' rather than cling to the ecumenical title for them. The Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) touched briefly on the issue in its first 'Agreed Statement on Authority in the Church' (1976), no. 19, mentioning obliquely the distinction between ecumenical and general councils, but disappointingly it did not develop the argument.

The question of whether the ten medieval councils from Lateran I to Lateran V should be regarded as general councils of the Western church rather than ecumenical councils is undoubtedly a very important one. The same arguments apply, of course, to Trent, Vatican I and II: without the participation of the churches of the Reformation these later councils may

better be described as general councils of the Roman Catholic Church than of the Western Church. Even so, they are of great significance. The ten medieval councils were the most authoritative in Western Christendom and it was in the West that the large majority of Christians lived. There was still vitality in the Orthodox Church and it continued to hold major councils – for example the councils of Constantinople in 1341 and 1351, which endorsed Hesychasm, and the councils of Jassy in 1642 and Jerusalem in 1672, which taught concerning the eucharist and the nature of the church – but with the advance of Islam it was for the most part, until recent times, a church on the defensive and developments were limited. Since the Reformation, moreover, the Roman Catholic Church has remained the largest church and may claim to represent the mainstream of Christianity. Another point is that there were major schisms before 1054, as we have seen, so that it is false to contrast too sharply the unity of the church of the first millennium with the divisions of the second millennium and so to exaggerate the status of the early councils at the expense of the later ones. Nevertheless, the more relaxed approach to the medieval and later councils in the West, encouraged at the highest level by pope Paul VI, may form a key to ecumenical progress since it removes the necessity of Trent and Vatican I being given an absolute status and thereby remaining a block to ecumenical dialogue.

7. Preoccupation with the Papacy

Ecumenical councils are a good antidote to obsession with the papacy. Pope Paul VI said on several occasions that the papacy is the greatest obstacle to reunion among Christians and John Paul II in his encyclical *Ut unum sint* invited Christians to suggest ways for the papacy to become more acceptable and effective. The councils help on both scores. They show the strengths and limitations of the papacy and, perhaps of most importance, the wider context of Church order in which the papacy should be seen. They help us to avoid what might be called the 'Hebblethwaite' syndrome, yearning for the perfect pope and being almost permanently disappointed when he does not arrive![16] The councils teach us not to expect too much from the papacy. Pope Honorius I was condemned for monothelitism by three successive ecumenical councils, those of Constantinople III, Nicaea II and Constantinople IV.[17] The councils bear witness to the leading support given by popes over five centuries to forms of holy war: the crusade to recapture the Holy Land as well as crusades against heretics within Western Christendom.[18] They also bear witness to papal support for the Inquisition and

its procedures.[19] Clearly the papacy is not preserved from all error, even from grave errors.

On the other hand, despite these lapses, we can be thankful for the Holy Spirit's continuing guidance of the see of Rome. In doctrinal matters, the condemnations of pope Honorius and the relatively few other major mistakes of the popes, during the first millennium of the Church, contrast with the more numerous and serious errors of the bishops of the other patriarchal sees of Constantinople, Alexandria and Antioch. Indeed, caution was generally a mark of the papacy during this time: perhaps a lesson for the papacy today. It was not that the popes had a direct line to the Holy Spirit – they too had to struggle with the doctrinal and other issues of their day – yet it is remarkable how, in the end, they normally emerged from these complicated controversies on the right side. They were more like goalkeepers, or long-stops if you will excuse a cricketing metaphor, preserving the Church in the last line of defence, rather than centre-forwards, fast bowlers or other front-line attackers.

These strengths and limitations provide, in themselves, a context for the papacy today: helping us and other Christians to appreciate this great institution and yet not to expect too much from it. The councils also set the papacy within the wider context of the church. This is perhaps done most clearly, paradoxically, in the decree that is sometimes seen as providing the greatest exaltation and isolation of the papacy, namely Vatican I's decree on papal infallibility. For, the decree does not say directly that the pope is infallible. It says, rather, that in certain solemn situations the pope 'possesses . . . the infallibility which the divine Redeemer willed his church to enjoy'.[20] In other words, the pope's infallibility is placed within the context of the Church's, not outside it, and the Church, as Vatican II reminds us in its decree on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, is primarily the people of God.[21] Christ has promised an overall guidance to the people of God, which clearly has not and will not preserve it from all errors: so too for the papacy.

My favourite conciliar decree situating the papacy within the wider context of the Church comes from the fifth ecumenical council, the second Council of Constantinople in 553. Here is shown, in beautify language, the need for broad-based authority.

> The holy fathers, who have gathered at intervals in the four holy councils (the first four ecumenical councils of Nicaea I, Constantinople I, Ephesus and Chalcedon), have followed the examples of antiquity. They dealt with heresies and current problems by debate in common, since it was established as certain that when the

disputed question is set out by each side in communal discussion, the light of truth drives out the shadows of lying.

> The truth cannot be made clear in any other way when there are debates about questions of faith, since everyone requires the assistance of his neighbour. As Solomon says in his proverbs: 'A brother who helps a brother shall be exalted like a strong city; he shall be as strong as a well established kingdom' (Proverbs 18,19). Again in Ecclesiastes he says: 'Two are better than one, for they have a good reward for their toil' (Ecclesiastes 4,9). And the Lord himself says: 'Amen I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matthew 18,19).'[22]

8. Ecumenical Councils and the Future

My final reflection partly summarises points already made. It is that a more conciliar approach surely represents the best way forward for ecumenism. The decree from Constantinople II just cited makes the point clearly. The Orthodox Church and the non-Chalcedonian (Oriental Orthodox) churches, as well as the churches of the Reformation, all use conciliar (synodical) forms of government and councils were fundamental to church order in the first millennium of Christianity. Any form of reunion that is likely to be acceptable to these churches will require the Catholic Church to return to a more conciliar form of government.

The Catholic Church's long-standing suspicion of conciliarism was mentioned in the third reflection, also how damaging and unnecessary is this suspicion. It can learn from other churches regarding the conciliar dimension of church government but it also has much to contribute to the debate inasmuch as it has preserved better than other churches many other aspects of church order – the papacy is but one example – which are important complements and balances to councils. Despite this suspicion of councils, moreover, the Catholic Church has in fact held exceptionally effective ones – Trent and Vatican II are obvious examples – and so has good experience of them to offer to others.

Even within the Catholic Church, conciliarism offers a helpful way forward. Recently, encouraged by the pope's letter *Ut unum sint*, there has been considerable discussion of reform of the Catholic Church's structures of

government. Too much of the focus, in my opinion, has been upon reform of the papacy and of the Roman Curia.[23] It is notoriously difficult for any institutions to reform themselves, so that waiting for these reforms may be waiting too long. The councils, on the other hand, offer another way forward, one that has its origins at the centre of the Church's tradition and whose orthodoxy is therefore guaranteed and yet is also acceptable to other Christian churches. This way forward, too, offers many possibilities for future developments. Flexibility of arrangements in the councils of the past make this same quality possible in the future. In terms of place, as mentioned, the first eight ecumenical councils were held in modern Turkey, half of them in Asia. Future ecumenical councils, therefore, could return to Asia or be held in Africa or America: Manila or Kinshasa or New York? In terms of organisation, the first eight councils were summoned by the emperors or empresses of the day, presided over by them directly or through their officials, and their decrees were promulgated by them. So the laity, including women, may play a greater role in ecumenical councils to come. Indeed, Constantine, emperor at the time of Nicaea I, was not a Christian, strictly speaking, inasmuch as he had not yet been baptised: maybe influences and individuals from outside the visible Church will return to play a fuller role in the councils of the future? In many ways the councils show how inventive the Church can be in its arrangements.

In government, indeed, the councils have usually been ahead of their time. The early councils, especially, offered a model to secular government and society: they were more open and more democratic than their counterparts in secular life. Then, indeed, the Church as a whole, in which the councils played an integral part, was a leader in society. It offered more opportunities to women or to slaves, for example, than they were afforded by secular society. This is a tradition of which Christians, and Catholics, can be proud. Now, on the contrary, the Catholic Church is in danger of lagging behind. It is placing excessive emphasis on the government of the Church being different from that of secular society – that it has its own hierarchical forms of government that have nothing to do with secular democracy – and on the need for the Church to be counter-cultural. Earlier the Church had less fear of other institutions. It was readier to adopt for itself the good elements in them, to use and then to improve upon them, to give a lead in society rather than to follow reluctantly or to distance itself unnecessarily. We saw a revival of this leadership in government, on the part of the Church, at the time of Vatican II, but the momentum does not seem to have been maintained. The councils open people's eyes to hopeful possibilities for the future.

To end, let me disown any wish to urge the calling soon of another ecumenical council and any ability to prophecy when the next one will take place. My feeling is that Vatican II needs more years of assimilation. Another council too soon could produce rushed and divisive results – rather like Ephesus II, the 'Robber' council back in 449. There is nothing surprising about this need of 'reception': major councils such as Nicaea I, Chalcedon and Trent all took at least a century for the Church to digest. Councils depend above all upon the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so they often occur at times and in ways that are unexpected to us: God's ways are not our ways, the Holy Spirit is full of surprises. No more so was this the case than with Vatican II, which nobody except Pope John XXIII seems to have expected.

The point of this eighth and last reflection is rather to urge the importance of conciliarism within the Church at lower levels. Synod, the equivalent of council, is an evocative word formed from two Greek words meaning 'together' (σύν) and 'journey' (ὁδός). The sense is of travelling companions, people meeting for a purpose, with an unknown journey before them, in hope and expectation. A beautiful image of the pilgrim Church.

The Book of the Councils: Nicaea I to Vatican II

The ecumenical and general councils[1] of the Church have produced arguably the most important documents of Christianity after the Bible. In establishing the 'book' of these councils, Christians have had to confront three problems that are similar to those involved in establishing the book of the Bible. First, which councils are to be considered ecumenical or general, parallelling the question of which books are to be included in the Bible. Secondly, which decrees are to be considered the authentic decrees of a particular council, parallelling the question of which chapters and verses make up a particular book of the Bible. Thirdly, which manuscripts or editions form the best text of a given decree, parallelling the search for the best texts of Scripture. There are, too, the additional issues of establishing some hierarchy in the importance of the councils and their decrees – the great creeds and doctrinal statements outrank, surely, most decrees of a purely disciplinary nature, just as the gospels have a certain priority within the New Testament or Romans and Galatians outrank in importance the pastoral epistles. Then there are the difficulties of translating the original texts into the vernacular languages, alike for the councils as for the Bible.

This essay covers what Roman Catholics, and some other Christian churches, call the 21 ecumenical and general councils from Nicaea I in 325 to Vatican II in 1962–65. The first seven of them, before the beginning of the schism between East and West in the eleventh century, from Nicaea I in 325 to Nicaea II in 787, are recognised as ecumenical councils – that is to say, councils of the whole Church – by the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, sometimes by the Anglican Church,[2] and perhaps, when pressed, by many other Christian churches. Then follows the disputed eighth council, Constantinople IV in 869–70, which will be discussed later. The seventh

council, Nicaea II in 787, may be seen as the last of the truly ecumenical councils, but the Church's clock cannot be stopped – even when a major schism occurs. In order to trace the story down to the present the essay will cover to include the full book of the ecumenical and general councils as recognised by one major church, the Roman Catholic Church, I shall include the ten general councils of the Western church in the Middle Ages, Lateran I in 1123 to Lateran V in 1512–17, and the three general councils of the Roman Catholic Church since the Reformation, Trent in 1545–63, Vatican I in 1869–70 and Vatican II in 1962–65.[3]

Given the great importance of these councils, due to their more or less binding authority for many Christians, as distinct from the lesser authority of other councils, it is not surprising that more labour on the part of Christians has gone into the composition of their decrees than into any other book of Christianity, the Bible again excepted: both the labour of the councils themselves and that of deciding what should go into their 'book'. With the Bible, the matter was largely solved early in the Christian era, with the establishment of the canon of Scripture between the second and fourth centuries; though the work of establishing the best texts of these books continued and some questions about the canon remained. With the book of the councils, on the other hand, major work has never stopped and has seen interesting variations in its focus through the centuries.

To begin with the first Council of Nicaea in 325, the central difficulty is that no *acta* or minutes of the council survive. It is unclear whether records of some kind were kept but have been lost or whether they were never made. For our knowledge of the council, therefore, we depend on later accounts. For the creed, the council's most important document, the earliest texts come from the letters of two participants at the council: Athanasius, the young deacon and secretary of bishop Alexander of Alexandria, the leading opponent of Arius, who was soon to succeed Alexander as bishop, and secondly, Eusebius of Caesarea, a supporter of Arius and opponent of Alexander and Athanasius (though Eusebius's letter – which includes the text of the creed – survives only in Athanasius's citation of it). One might be suspicious of a text if Athanasius were the only source, but in fact there are only very small variations between the text of the creed in these two letters and in the other witnesses during the next century, including the first time the creed was quoted in full by another council, at Ephesus in 431.[4] The creed was just too important for people to meddle with it.

The 20 disciplinary canons of Nicaea come down to us through various later collections of canons, most notably the sixth-century collections of John

Scholasticus in the East and Dionysius Exiguus in the West. The selection and the formulation of the canons at the council itself remain obscure, however. Other decisions of the council are known to us through letters and various later sources: decisions about the date of Easter, the Meletian schism and other matters. Indeed, it may be that this later evidence has refocused the purposes of the council. The formulation of the creed, which came to be considered as by far the most important achievement of the council, may not have been its overriding purpose at the time. Equally or more important may have been the other issues of Easter, the Meletian schism and some disciplinary canons, or indeed the celebration of Constantine's 20 years as emperor.[5] In this respect it is noticeable that the creed is not cited very often in the years immediately after the council, and that even Athanasius appealed to it vigorously only much later in his life.[6] Still, there is the principle of reception: the book of the councils is partly constituted by how people subsequently evaluated a council, not only by how the members of the council saw it at the time. According to this principle, it is reasonable that the creed should have priority.

The situation regarding the second Council of the book, Constantinople I in 381, is even more obscure. The creed it promulgated, for which it is chiefly known, lay virtually unknown for 70 years until the Council of Chalcedon in 451. At the latter council an impasse was reached when the creed of 325 was judged inadequate to the new situation. The creed of Constantinople was suggested as a way forward, as a legitimate improvement upon the creed of Nicaea, better suited to the needs of the time, and after considerable discussion it was accepted as such.[7] This creed has survived until today as the most widely accepted creed among the Christian churches. It is normally referred to simply as the Nicene Creed though many scholars prefer to call it more accurately the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. Its acceptance by the Council of Chalcedon effectively promoted the first Council of Constantinople into the book of ecumenical councils 70 years after it was held, the elevation of the creed carrying with it the elevation of the council.

The Council of Ephesus in 431 is well documented;[8] the difficulty is its inconclusive outcome. Those who supported Mary's title of Θεοτόκος, Mother of God or God-bearer, led by Cyril of Alexandria, and those who supported Nestorius's dislike of the title, led by John of Antioch, held separate assemblies in Ephesus and refused to come together. They anathematised each other and eventually the emperor Theodosius dissolved the council without any agreed statement and imprisoned both Cyril and Nestorius. Cyril managed to escape from his arrest and returned to Alexandria in triumph, but it was a further two years before some kind of settlement was reached between

him and John of Antioch. Even then it was far from clear which decrees should be regarded as approved and the boat was further rocked by the stormy council held in the same city 18 years later in 449: Ephesus II or the so-called 'Robber' Council of Ephesus.

Chalcedon is crucial not only for its 'Definition of Faith' but also because it effectively established the book of ecumenical councils up to that point, the canon of which councils should be regarded as ecumenical and which not.

First, it endorsed the word 'ecumenical' as a technical term in the Christian vocabulary to denote councils of the whole Church; councils that were therefore binding upon the whole Church, as distinct from diocesan or provincial or other councils of a more local authority. As Professor Henry Chadwick has shown, the earliest ecumenical councils were not church councils at all, rather 'ecumenical' gatherings – that is, gatherings of people from all over the Roman Empire, which then regarded itself as almost coterminous with the inhabited world (the meaning of οἰκουμενική, 'where there are houses') – of actors, athletes and linen-workers, or their representatives.[9] Only gradually was the word absorbed into the vocabulary of Christian ecclesiology. Nicaea I called itself the 'great' and/or 'holy' council, not 'ecumenical'.[10] Constantinople I was referred to as an ecumenical council on at least one occasion[11] but it is doubtful whether the word was being used in the full sense it later came to acquire: the council was clearly one of the Eastern Church rather than of the whole Church. The term develops at Ephesus I and Ephesus II but the decisive step came at Chalcedon, when, at the opening of the council's Definition of Faith, it described itself as the 'holy and great and ecumenical synod' – 'holy and great', following the language of Nicaea I, then the addition of 'ecumenical'.[12] After Chalcedon the technical meaning of the term was fairly clear and consistent.

Secondly, Chalcedon clarified which councils were to be regarded as ecumenical and which not. In its opening session it outlawed the disputed second Council of Ephesus of 449 by reversing its decisions, then in its Definition of Faith it approved of three and only three previous councils: Nicaea I, Constantinople I and Ephesus I.[13] It did not explicitly call them 'ecumenical' but the solemn approval accorded to them, alongside the authority of Chalcedon itself, meant that the list of ecumenical councils – four including Chalcedon – became established.

Thirdly, Chalcedon went some way towards sorting out the thorny question of which statements of these four councils were to be regarded as their authentic decrees in doctrinal matters. For Nicaea I and Constantinople I this was straightforward enough: it mentioned and quoted in full the two creeds.

In the case of Ephesus the matter was much more complex but the council largely sided with Cyril of Alexandria, calling him, alongside Pope Celestine, the 'leader' of the council and explicitly approving various of his letters. As for Chalcedon itself, the 'Definition' approved and quoted from the letter, or 'Tome', that Pope Leo had written to Flavian, patriarch of Constantinople, and so incorporated the letter into the Definition.[14]

For the next three councils – Constantinople II in 553, Constantinople III in 680–1 and Nicaea II in 787 – the story is comparatively straightforward. Each of them quoted with approval the preceding councils and only these councils, then added themselves to the list, making seven with Nicaea II.[15] Some other councils regarded themselves as ecumenical but were not received as such by the wider Church. The iconoclast Council of Hieria in 753, for example, declared itself an ecumenical council and in terms of the large number of participants and the unanimity of its decisions it may have seemed to fulfil the conditions of ecumenicity, but its decisions were reversed by Nicaea II 34 years later. Two other councils are candidates for the book. In 692 the Council of Trullo – or 'in Trullo' because it was held in the doomed hall (ἐν τῷ τρούλλῳ) of the imperial palace in Constantinople – issued 102 disciplinary canons. It has always been regarded as an ecumenical council by the Eastern Church, though as an extension of the fifth and sixth councils of Constantinople II and III rather than as a separate council, hence its other name of the Quini-Sext council. For various reasons, however, mainly the anti-Western tone of some of the canons, it has not maintained its place as ecumenical in the West. Conversely, Constantinople IV in 870–71, whose principal business was the deposition of Photius as patriarch of Constantinople, has been excluded from the list in the East but for a long time was included in the West – to the dismay of the Eastern church on account of its veneration for Photius. Many Western scholars are now, however, ready to accept its exclusion, for reasons that are complex but mainly depend on accepting the authenticity of a letter allegedly written by Pope John VIII ten years after the council which annulled the council's decision to depose Photius.[16]

The situation after the beginning of the schism between East and West in the eleventh century changed dramatically. None of the later councils is regarded as ecumenical by the Eastern Church, unsurprisingly inasmuch as there was no eastern representation at them, apart from small delegations at Lyons II in 1274 and Florence in 1439. Nor are they generally regarded as ecumenical councils by the churches of the Reformation, though more, it seems, on the slightly different grounds that the Church was seriously in error

during this time and therefore was incapable of holding a valid ecumenical council. What about the attitude of the Western church itself during this time to the ten councils of Lateran I to IV in 1123, 1139, 1179 and 1215 respectively, Lyons I and II in 1245 and 1274, Vienne in 1311–12, Constance in 1414–18, Basel-Florence in 1431–45 and Lateran V in 1512–17? There was little doubt that they were general councils of the Western church and held a privileged position within it, though there were secondary questions about whether the representation at Lateran I and II had been large enough to make them into general councils as well as debates about the legality of parts of Constance and Basel-Florence. But should they be considered ecumenical councils of the whole Church rather than general councils of the Western church? On this crucial question medieval people who troubled to think about it seem to have been uncertain and to have preferred the view that they were only general councils of the Western church, on the grounds that an ecumenical council was impossible without eastern participation and in the belief that the schism would soon be healed and then a truly ecumenical council could be held again.

The evidence for this cautious approach to the medieval councils has been laid out by Professor Bermejo.[17] The Council of Florence, for example, was often referred to, even by popes and well into the sixteenth century, as the eighth or ninth (to include Constantinople IV) ecumenical council because the Eastern Church had been represented at it.[18] All the other councils of the medieval West were thus omitted from the list of ecumenical councils because they lacked eastern representation. Strong evidence also comes from the Council of Constance. After the three claimants to the papacy had been deposed or persuaded to resign, the council drew up a profession of faith that the man about to be elected as the new pope would be obliged to make. The profession contained this promise:

> I will firmly believe and hold the catholic faith according to the traditions of the apostles, of the general councils and of other holy fathers, especially of the eight holy ecumenical [Latin, *universalia*] councils – namely the first at Nicaea, the second at Constantinople, the third at Ephesus, the fourth at Chalcedon, the fifth and sixth at Constantinople, the seventh at Nicaea and the eighth at Constantinople – as well as of the general [Latin, *generalia*] councils at the Lateran, Lyons and Vienne.[19]

There is clearly a distinction in the profession between the eight ecumenical

councils before the schism and the subsequent medieval councils, with priority being given to the former, even though the distinction is not expanded upon.

The drive to promote the medieval councils into the book of ecumenical councils, and to provide editions of all the decrees of all the ecumenical councils, indeed of other councils too, began in the sixteenth century. Two factors were decisive. First was the invention of printing, which made possible the printing of large collections of texts. Second was the Counter-Reformation, which encouraged Roman Catholics to justify the medieval Church. Part of the protest of the Reformation was to consider the medieval Church an aberration, as mentioned earlier, and legitimising the medieval councils as truly ecumenical was a central plank in the Roman Catholic response to this protest. A third factor was the interest in councils on the part of Gallican scholars in France.

The three milestones in this colossal work of scholarship were the so-called Roman edition of 1608–12, 'Mansi' (1759–1927) and 'Alberigo' (3rd edn, 1973).[20] The four volumes of the Roman edition, with its twofold title, *Τῶν ἁγίων οἰκουμενικῶν συνόδων τῆς καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας ἄπαντα: Concilia generalia Ecclesiae catholicae Pauli V pontificis maximi auctoritate edita*, which was produced by scholars in Rome working under the auspices of Pope Paul V, included all the ten medieval councils (except the Basel part of Basel-Florence on account of its conflict with Pope Eugenius IV), and the edition proved decisive in these councils, remaining thereafter in the Roman Catholic Church's list of ecumenical councils. The monumental *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, 53 vols (Florence, Venice, Paris and Leipzig, 1759–1927), which was inaugurated by Giovanni Mansi and continued by many scholars, included local as well as ecumenical councils and much background material (minutes of debates, speeches, lists of participants, etc.), collectively known as *acta*, as well as the promulgated decrees. It is for councils what Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, and *Patrologia Latina* are for the Fathers of the Church: though strictly in terms of the decrees of the ecumenical councils the improvements of 'Mansi' over earlier editions were relatively small except inasmuch as it made them more widely available. Finally in 1973 a team of scholars led by Giuseppe Alberigo produced a third edition of their *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta* (= *COD*). This volume provided, in addition to short introductions and notes, etc., the texts in the original Greek or Latin languages, according to the best versions then available, of all the decrees of all the ecumenical councils, numbering 21 according to the then tradition of the Roman Catholic Church: eight before the East–West schism (including therefore Constantinople IV), the

ten medieval councils from Lateran I to Lateran V, plus Trent, Vatican I and Vatican II.

In a sense *COD* closed the book of the ecumenical councils, at least until a new one assembles. Further refinements have already been made to the texts of particular decrees since 1973, by way of better critical editions, and this work will surely continue. Considerable work, moreover, has been done since then in making the decrees more widely available to readers, chiefly through bilingual versions that reproduce the original texts of *COD* and provide a vernacular translation on each facing page.[21]

In another sense, however, the whole book has been reopened by a renewed questioning of which councils should be included in it. The list of ecumenical councils has never been formally defined by the Roman Catholic Church, notwithstanding the authority of the Roman edition of 1608–12 and later acceptance of its assumptions. The debate at the scholarly level was reopened in recent times mainly by the articles of V. Peri and Yves Congar, which questioned whether any councils after the East–West schism could be considered ecumenical.[22] Vatican II also contributed to the debate by extending the meaning of Church, for Roman Catholics, beyond the Roman Catholic community and therefore implicitly calling into question whether a council could be ecumenical without the participation of other Christian churches and communities. Significant, too, was the speech delivered by Pope Paul VI in 1974 on the seventh centenary of the second Council of Lyons (1274). In it he referred to Lyons II and the other medieval councils as 'general councils of the Western world' (*generales synodos in occidentali orbe*).[23] Pope Paul was normally very careful with his words and his preference for calling them general councils of the West, rather than ecumenical councils, was surely intentional.

The question of the status of the medieval councils, and, for similar reasons, of Trent, Vatican I and Vatican II, is of huge importance in ecumenical relations since almost all the questions in debate between the Roman Catholic Church on the one hand, and the Orthodox Church and the churches of the Reformation on the other, depend on statements made by these later councils. The reopening of the question of their status within the Roman Catholic community, and the implication that Catholics may not be so absolutely bound to their statements as was previously thought, may prove to be a helpful way forward in the search for Christian unity. The book of the councils is full of surprises and it looks as though it may still have some in store.

Ecumenical Councils and Non-Christian Religions[1]

This essay focuses on how the ecumenical councils of the Church have viewed religions other than Christianity. Through it I hope to shed some light on issues that are preoccupying the Church today: the place of non-Christian religions in the plan of divine providence and of our salvation. By 'ecumenical councils of the Christian church' I refer here to the 21 councils from Nicaea I to Vatican II that have traditionally been included in the Catholic Church's list of ecumenical councils.[2] Only the first seven councils, Nicaea I to Nicaea II, are considered 'ecumenical' by the Orthodox Church; only the first four, Nicaea I to Chalcedon, by most churches of the Reformation. Even within the Catholic Church there is debate as to whether the councils after the beginning of the schism between the churches of East and West – which is usually dated to the exchange of excommunications between the two churches in 1054 – should be regarded as ecumenical councils or rather as general councils of the Western, or Roman Catholic, Church.[3] However, it seems right to include the later councils in this essay – first because even if they are not considered 'ecumenical' in the full sense, they have nevertheless constituted during this time the main councils of the Western and Roman Catholic church, which has remained the largest Christian church in terms of numbers of adherents and, in this sense at least, may be considered to represent best the mainstream of Christianity; and secondly, in order to continue the story into recent times, avoiding an end half way through.

Early Church: Nicaea I to Nicaea II

The ecumenical councils of the first millennium CE – Nicaea I in 325 to Nicaea II in 787 or the disputed Constantinople IV in 869–70 – say little

about non-Christian religions and nothing directly about the burning issue of today: whether or how these other religions may be channels of salvation for men and women.

In their creeds and doctrinal decrees these councils principally taught about the Trinity and the divinity and humanity of Christ. They were mainly concerned with these mysteries in themselves. Only very secondarily do they speak about their consequences for us; how Christ brings us salvation.

The creed of the first Council of Nicaea professes that the 'one Lord Jesus Christ' came down and became incarnate 'for us humans and for our salvation'. The improved version of the creed promulgated by the first Council of Constantinople in 381 retains these expressions and adds that Jesus Christ was 'crucified for us'. The latter version gives us, too, the four marks of the church, 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic', but does not examine further the church's role in salvation.[4]

Various disciplinary canons of both councils speak about the need for (re)baptism on the part of members of various heretical Christian groups seeking entry into the true church: the followers of Paul of Samosata in canon 19 of Nicaea I; Eunomians, Montanists and Sabellians in canon 7 of Constantinople I.[5] Canon 13 of Nicaea I speaks of communion for the dying as 'their last, most necessary viaticum'.[6] These canons, therefore, emphasise the importance of belonging to the church and participation in its rites but do not explicitly limit salvation to such membership and participation.

The next two ecumenical councils, Ephesus and Chalcedon, also emphasise Christ's central role in our salvation without discussing the role of other religions. Ephesus's 'Formula of Union' repeats the thought of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed when it speaks of the Incarnation being 'for us and for our salvation'; Cyril of Alexandria's third letter to Nestorius, which seems to have been approved by the council, speaks of the 'Word which came from God, through whom the power of death was overcome'.[7] More and firmer statements come in the 'Tome' of Pope Leo, which was formally approved by the Council of Chalcedon and therefore may be regarded as a decree of the council. In particular, Leo cited various classic texts of the New Testament concerning the mediation of Christ: 'the one mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus' (1 Tim. 2.5); 'The blood of Jesus purifies us from every sin' (1 John 1.17); 'This is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. Who is it that conquers the world save one who believes that Jesus is Son of God?' (1 John 5, 4–5). Paraphrasing Hebrews 2.15, Leo summarised 'the whole purpose' of the Incarnation as being 'to restore humankind, who had been deceived, so that it (Christ's birth) might defeat death and, by its

power, destroy the devil who held the power of death'.[8] In its 'Definition of Faith', Chalcedon speaks more generally of 'the mystery of the Lord's economy on our behalf'.[9]

The remaining ecumenical councils before the East–West schism add a few further, indirect touches regarding non-Christian religions. Constantinople II (553) censured Theodore of Mopsuestia because, it alleged, he had spoken in similar terms about Christ as about Plato, Mani, Epicurus and Marcion, suggesting that Christ, like the other four men, was only a teacher who attracted disciples. Both Constantinople III and IV censured Nestorius for his Jewish mentality (in not according divinity to Christ). Nicaea II ordered that 'care should be taken that they (Jews who convert to Christianity) abandon Hebrew practices'. Finally, Constantinople IV spoke more generally of deviants from Christian orthodoxy being 'ensnared in the pit of damnation'.[10]

Why do these councils of the first millennium say so little about non-Christian religions? Certainly there were many other religions confronting Christians. Even after the conversion of the emperor Constantine and the establishment of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, many other religions survived within the Empire. Platonism, in its various forms, continued to be the dominant philosophy. Judaism remained vigorous and fascinating for many; the seventh century saw the arrival of Islam. There were some contacts, too, with Hinduism, Buddhism and other religions of the East. The bishops attending the councils in question and responsible for their decrees must have been aware of this religious pluralism, especially since the large majority of them came from the eastern regions of the Empire. Among Christians, moreover, there existed the more liberal tradition according to which other religions were seen as at least shadows of Christianity and in some sense channels of salvation. Justin the Martyr (*c.* 100–65), Clement of Alexandria (*c.* 150–215) and Origen (*c.* 185–254) were early examples of this tradition, which continued to exert influence during the epoch of the councils.

On the other hand, ecumenical councils cannot be expected to discuss everything of importance. For the most part those of the Church's first millennium focused on resolving certain doctrinal issues that were dividing the church and consideration of other religions, including their salvific value, was not one of them. The omission is not surprising. Many other matters of major importance were, likewise, not discussed in any detail by the early councils because they were not seriously divisive: for example, doctrine (as distinct from disciplinary practices) concerning the Eucharist.[11] The theology of hell,

too, was still in the process of development and there was less discussion than would later be the case regarding the precise fate of non-Christians. A final point is that Christians were then captivated by the gospel message, its truth and beauty and fruitfulness, so that they were more interested in proclaiming and sharing it than inquiring into the situation of those without it. Truth was the absorbing passion. There was dialogue and political correctness, but first of all people were expected to state frankly and directly what they believed in. As a result, church councils naturally concentrated on Christian matters rather than the business of others.

Middle Ages

The Middle Ages brought a sharp change of tone. Regarding both heretics in general and members of other religions more particularly, and their fates, the ecumenical/general councils of the period issued a number of statements, largely in a hostile tone. The following were the strongest:

> Lateran IV (1215), canon 1: 'There is indeed one universal church of the faithful, outside of which nobody at all is saved.'[12]

> Ibid., canon 3: 'We excommunicate and anathematize every heresy raising itself up against the holy, orthodox and catholic faith . . . We condemn all heretics, whatever names they may go under. They have different faces indeed but their tails are tied together inasmuch as they are alike in their pride.'[13]

> Florence, decree of union with the Copts (1442): 'It [the holy Roman church] firmly believes, professes and preaches that all those who are outside the catholic church, not only pagans but also Jews or heretics and schismatics, cannot share in eternal life and will go into the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels, unless they are joined to the catholic church before the end of their lives; . . . and that nobody can be saved . . . unless he/she has persevered in the bosom and the unity of the catholic church.'[14]

To these statements of principle should be added many others of a more practical nature. The latter touched people's lives and often involved, directly or indirectly, theological issues.

Thus, the fourth Lateran Council (1215) issued, in addition to the two canons cited above, four canons (67–70) concerning Jews. Hostility is evident, at least to modern ears, even from the titles of the canons, which are as follows: 'Usury of Jews'; 'Jews should be distinguished from Christians in their dress'; 'Jews are not to hold public offices'; 'Converts to the faith among the Jews may not retain their old faith'. The same council's final decree summoned a crusade, 'to liberate the holy Land from infidel hands'. The decree was repeated in similar terms – and Muslims/Saracens described in similar or harsher language – by the councils of Lyons I, Lyons II, Vienne and Lateran V.[15]

The Council of Vienne (1311–12) issued two decrees seeking the conversion to Christianity of members of other faiths, principally Judaism and Islam. Canon 24, reflecting on 'how we may lead the erring into the way of truth', legislated for the establishment of professorships of Hebrew, Arabic and Chaldaic – 'the languages most in use among unbelievers' – at the Roman Curia and the universities of Paris, Oxford, Bologna and Salamanca, so that the beneficiaries might be better qualified to 'propagate the saving faith among the heathen peoples'. Canon 25 was sharper in its denunciation of Muslims, who 'meet to adore the infidel Mahomet'.[16]

The Council of Basel in 1434 ordered 'Jews and other infidels' to attend sermons given for their benefit in order that they might 'recognise their errors'. To this end it renewed Vienne's decree establishing professorships in various languages, so that the sermons could be given in the languages of those attending them. It forbade 'Jews and other infidels from having Christians, male or female, in their households and service, or as nurses of their children, and Christians from joining with them in their festivities, marriages, banquets or baths, or in much conversation, and from taking them as doctors or agents of marriages or officially appointed mediators of other contracts'. Finally, it renewed some of the legislation of Lateran IV: Jews were to wear distinctive dress, and while generous provision was made for those who converted to Christianity, nevertheless once having converted they were to be compelled not to return to their former ways and beliefs.[17]

How can this change of tone towards non-Christian religions, in the Middle Ages, be explained?

The absence of the eastern contribution is one factor. There were no representatives of the Orthodox and other Eastern churches at the ecumenical/general councils of the Middle Ages, apart from small delegations at Lyons II and Florence when reunion with the Western church was discussed. The more eclectic, pragmatic and pluralist approach of the East, where the presence

of widespread and sophisticated religions other than Christianity was a fact of life, was, as a result, missing.

A second factor is that strong language was accepted and respected. The point has already been made regarding the first millennium of the church's existence: it continued to be the case during the Middle Ages. In other words, much of the language regarding heretics and members of non-Christian religions that has just been cited sounds offensive to modern ears, yet it would not have carried the same degree of offence then. People were expected to say what they think in a more open and even dramatic way than is generally acceptable today. Accordingly, there was not as much hostility to and depreciation of other religions, on the part of Christians, as the conciliar decrees suggest to us today. We know that there were friendships between Christians, Jews and Muslims, and mutual respect for one another and interest in each other's religious beliefs, especially before more hardened attitudes prevailed from the thirteenth century onwards, perhaps especially at the more popular level. The apparent negativity of some of the conciliar decrees must be seen within this more positive context.

Thirdly, it is important to realise that Western Christendom throughout the Middle Ages felt threatened and on the defensive. From the sixteenth century onwards Christianity developed into a world religion with an accompanying confidence and often arrogance. The Middle Ages predates this development. The feeling then was almost the opposite of that today. At that time Christianity, more particularly Western Christendom, occupied a small corner of the globe and in many ways it was a shrinking religion. Islam and the Tartars (or Mongols) threatened its very existence, as the first Council of Lyons in 1245, just four years after the Tartars had captured and sacked the city of Budapest in Hungary, bemoaned in its decree 'The Tartars': 'When – God forbid! – the world is bereaved of the faithful, faith may turn aside from the world to lament its followers destroyed by the barbarity of this people.'[18] Besides the physical threats there was an underlying inferiority complex. Four civilisations were felt in various ways to be superior to Western Christendom: the classical world of ancient Rome, with which the medieval West had in many ways never really caught up: Byzantium, which considered itself to be the true heir of the ancient world much more than its upstart barbarian neighbours in the West; Islam, with its spectacular religious and material successes; and Judaism, a much older religion than Christianity whose adherents excelled Christians in many walks of life. The conciliar decrees, therefore, may appear aggressive and uncaring, but they should also be seen as the rather clumsy instincts or panic reactions of people who felt threatened,

of people who greatly cared for and wished to preserve what was precious to them. They express, too, an underlying sense of guilt: that Christians were to blame for the fact that they were not doing better in spreading the faith and converting people.[19]

The fourth consideration, which links with the first three, is that Western Christendom, from which the conciliar decrees emanated, was largely a single-religion society. There were small pockets of Jews within, living mostly in towns, at least until their expulsion from France, England and other countries at the end of the thirteenth century, and large numbers of Muslims on the borders of Christendom, especially on its eastern borders and in Spain. But for the most part Western Europe was overwhelmingly Christian, at least nominally so. The experience of living there was probably rather like living in an Islamic country today. There were great strengths, which can be expected in a single-religion society: an imagination and creativity in religious affairs, especially communally, that is all but impossible in a pluralist society. These strengths must be appreciated. But the almost inevitable dark side is a certain intolerance. Because there was such widespread acceptance of Christian doctrine and practice, it was all too easy to conclude that dissidents were wrong-headed or perverse: a point put succinctly by canon 3 of the fourth Lateran council, quoted above.

The fifth and perhaps most obvious point is that the views expressed by the decrees – at least the more extreme views – were not necessarily shared by all or even the majority of Christians. This context of the councils is important. In some cases, indeed, it is implied by the decrees themselves. The Council of Basel's prohibition of various forms of intercourse between Christians and Jews, for example, suggests that friendship between the two groups was quite common: otherwise there would have been no need to enact the prohibition. Even at the more theological level there remained a more liberal tradition. Julian of Norwich, the fourteenth-century English mystic, is perhaps the most famous representative of this latter tradition. Her belief, expressed in her work, *Revelations of Divine Love*, that God in his/her 'motherly' love will somehow bring good out of all situations, that 'all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well', seems to suggest the hope of salvation for all people.[20]

A sixth and final point is that the authority of the most extreme statement, that in the Council of Florence's decree of union with the Copts, cited above, may be queried. It was issued at the tail end of the council when there were relatively few bishops still in attendance. Besides pope Eugenius IV and a solitary representative of the Coptic Church, at most some 70 bishops and

other prelates signed the decree.[21] These circumstances certainly seem to reduce its authority somewhat.

Trent, Vatican I and II

The Council of Trent (1545–63) concerned itself with the issues arising from the Reformation and did not discuss directly non-Christian religions and their possible roles in salvation. This was the case even though the council occurred at the time of Europe's 'discovery' of the wider world and the resulting growth of interest in its religions. Once again, one should not expect too much from any particular ecumenical council. Trent, like most others, was called to address a particular crisis – in this case the Reformation – rather than to give a general exposition of the Christian faith and all its ramifications.

In terms of non-Christian religions, the council did not wish and was not ready – at least consciously – to go beyond the positions taken by the medieval councils. However, its teaching on original sin, baptism and justification, while aimed at the Reformers' teaching on these issues, indirectly developed somewhat the medieval conciliar teaching regarding salvation outside the Church, in some ways hardening it and in other ways opening doors.

On the one hand the council taught the fallen nature of all humankind through the sin of Adam. It also taught that this original sin is removed in us only through 'the merit of the one mediator, our lord Jesus Christ', that this merit is applied to us 'through the sacrament of baptism duly administered in the form of the church', and that baptism is 'necessary for salvation'.[22] On the other hand, it broadened the possibility of salvation by accepting the validity of baptism 'which is given by heretics in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, with the intention of doing what the church does';[23] and the 'baptism necessary for salvation' would be extended by theologians beyond 'baptism by water' to include 'baptism by blood' (martyrdom) as well as 'baptism by desire' (which would be broadened to include implicit as well as explicit desire). Also, in its decree on justification, the council, in this case in line with the Reformers, emphasised God's sovereignty and his freedom in deciding who to save: a freedom that, by implication, might be considered to extend to adherents of other (non-Christian) religions.[24]

The Council of Trent dominated Catholic theology for three centuries. The next council, Vatican I in 1869–70, initially intended to discuss a wide range of issues but was cut short by the Franco–Prussian war and the impending capture of Rome by the Italian army. As a result it promulgated only two

short decrees: 'Dogmatic constitution on the Catholic faith' and 'Dogmatic constitution on the church of Christ'.

The second decree, in focusing on papal infallibility, underlined the exclusivity of the Catholic Church and the role of the papacy within it. But it did not explicitly address the issue of non-Christian religions, nor did it renew the strong statements of the medieval councils about salvation being found only within the catholic Church.[25]

The decree on the Catholic faith, too, did not speak directly about non-Christian religions as they are normally understood. It directed attention, rather, against what it called 'the doctrine of rationalism and naturalism, which is utterly opposed to the Christian religion . . . [and] spares no effort to bring it about that Christ, who alone is our lord and saviour, is shut out from the minds of people and the moral life of nations'. Mainly in mind, evidently, were various philosophical and scientific developments in Europe that were associated with the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment. 'Rationalism and naturalism' might indeed be regarded as world religions, especially today, but their treatment would require another essay. Despite its sometimes negative tone, the decree, in linking reason and faith, natural and divine revelation, gave space for non-Christian religions to be seen as at least shadows of what may be found within Christianity.

The last council for our consideration, Vatican II (1962–65), is often noted for its change of attitude towards non-Christian religions. Some caution, however, is necessary here. The decree devoted to non-Christian religions, *Nostra aetate*, came about somewhat by accident. The early intention of the council was to have a decree just on Judaism. The immediate context was a growing awareness, in the years before the council, of the horrors of the Holocaust during the Second World War and the need for the Church to answer charges of anti-Semitism. Various individuals, however, both members of the council and others outside it, urged that it would be unbalanced and discourteous to discuss Judaism without speaking of the other religions of the world. The eventual result was *Nostra aetate*, which, besides Judaism, covers Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, as well as 'non-Christian religions' more generally.[26]

The decree is brief and cautious. Counting some 1,500 words in the Latin original, it is much the shortest of the 16 documents promulgated by the council. Its status is that of a 'Declaration', the least authoritative of the three categories into which the conciliar decrees were divided. Its language, too, is much less confident and positive than what might be called its sister decree,

Unitatis redintegratio, on ecumenical relations with other (non-Catholic) Christian churches and communities. These are its words about non-Christian religions in general: 'From ancient until modern times there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that unseen force which is present in the course of things and in events in human life, and sometimes even an acknowledgement of a supreme deity or even of a Father.' Equally cautious is its approval: 'The Catholic Church rejects nothing of those things which are true and holy in these religions.' Yet it gives a brief and mostly positive summary of each of four religions in particular: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Judaism. The decree is hesitant but wisely so. The council was unready to say much, but it said something and this in a positive and respectful way. This much alone was a major change, almost a revolution, from previous official attitudes of the Catholic Church. The decree has come to be seen as one of the most important issuing from the council, but because it opened some doors rather than because it provided a comprehensive doctrinal treatment. The gradual unfolding of the implications of the decree – of going through the doors and exploring further – has been the work of the council's reception and still has a long way to go.

Nostra aetate was the decree of Vatican II that was explicitly dedicated to non-Christian religions. It should be noted, however, that many other decrees, indeed the whole 'event' of the council, contributed towards a new and more open and positive approach to the various religions and religious phenomena in the world. Thus, the decree on the liturgy, which was the first to be promulgated by the council and to some extent set the tone for the others, stated that the church

> cultivates and encourages the gifts and endowments of mind and heart possessed by various races and peoples. It examines sympathetically whatever elements among people's customs do not constitute an irretrievable connivance with superstitions or false beliefs, and, if it can, it preserves them safe and sound. (*Sacrosanctum concilium*, no. 37)

The decree on missionary activity, while mainly concerned with evangelisation and building up local churches, nevertheless goes beyond the Christian world to speak of 'Whatever truth and grace are already to be found among peoples, a secret presence of God, so to speak' (*Ad gentes*, no. 9). Finally, the decrees on religious freedom (*Dignitatis humanae*) and the church in the modern world (*Gaudium et Spes*), which were promulgated right at the end

of the council, even though they do not enter in any detail into the topic of world religions, speak at length of the rights of all to religious freedom and of the worth and dignity of all human beings.

Conclusion

Christians have always been aware of those who belong to other religions. This is obvious. Their ecumenical councils, the concern of this essay, have expressed this awareness in a variety of ways. The variety has shown itself chronologically as a movement from relative silence to hostility and finally to some appreciation. Thus, the councils of the church's first millennium said little about religions other than Christianity, seemingly because of their fascination with the Christian mystery rather than ignorance of or lack of interest in other religions. This fascination with Christianity continued into the Middle Ages but at the same time awareness of other religions – especially Islam and Judaism – was accompanied much more by a perception of the physical, religious and cultural threats that they might pose. Even after Christianity grew into a world religion, from the sixteenth century onwards, this rather frightened approach continued. The second Vatican Council undoubtedly represents a turning point in these relations, to a more open and appreciative approach to other religions. Partly, no doubt, this may be explained by the greater status and confidence brought to Christianity by its new standing as a world religion and its links with influential 'Western' culture. How this new mood will develop in the future remains to be seen. It is possible that the next ecumenical council will be dominated by the topic. Yet the relevant issues remain relatively undigested by the Christian community, so that attempts by an ecumenical council to resolve them quickly might prove divisive rather than healing. My own sense is that they are best debated and lived within the church at lower levels, so to speak, for some time more. In this way a healthy harmony and consensus may emerge more from below, so that an ecumenical council dedicated to the topic may prove unnecessary.

The Image of John XXIII and Paul VI in the Anglo-Saxon World during and after Vatican II

The title of this essay refers to the 'Anglo-Saxon world', and the image of popes John XXIII and Paul VI in the countries that comprise it. Please, therefore, permit me to begin with a caution about the term 'Anglo-Saxon'. As I noted in the essay 'Historiography of Vatican II in the Anglophone World', earlier on in this collection, the term may have more resonance, more coherence, outside the so-called Anglo-Saxon world than inside it. There is, moreover, an obvious distinction between Anglo-Saxon and anglophone – both words deriving, of course, from the Angles and Saxons, tribes living in northern Germany and Denmark who came to Britain in the fifth century and gave to the country the new name of England, land of the Angles, and to its language that of English. There are many countries whose main language of communication is English, and which may therefore be called anglophone, but which would certainly not associate closely with Britain or the USA and would therefore disown any Anglo-Saxon label. India and many countries in Africa are obvious examples. This talk, therefore, will not attempt to cover the whole anglophone world but rather confine itself, for the most part, to the Anglo-Saxon world in the sense of Britain and the countries that have been influenced by it; countries that have been settled by the British rather than just colonised by them or given its language: the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are obvious examples.

Within this so-called Anglo-Saxon world there are, of course, huge variations, both between and within the countries in question. Despite these variations, I think it is fair to say that both the popes in question were much appreciated throughout the Anglo-Saxon world. This seems to me one of

the great strengths and charms of the papacy, and indeed to the credit of the Anglo-Saxons, if I may say so, that two such different characters, John XXIII and Paul VI, reigning as popes in very different situations, could both nevertheless command widespread respect. There was, as we shall see, significant dissent from some of the pronouncements of Pope Paul VI, but nevertheless as persons there was very general appreciation of their holiness and integrity, qualities which are perhaps the most important of all that can be expected of anyone called to the exalted office of the papacy. I say this as a personal reflection yet I think it is right to begin in this way before we examine in more detail how the two men were viewed by the media, politicians and others in the public eye. This is my overall impression, as one who lived mostly in England during the two pontificates and for three years as a Jesuit student at the Gregorian University in Rome, who was 15 when John XXIII was elected pope and two years ordained a priest when Paul VI died.

I would like to begin by reflecting briefly on how the two men themselves regarded the Anglo-Saxons. For their view of the Anglo-Saxon world is likely to have influenced, at least subtly and subconsciously, that world's perception of them. Their experiences were rather different. Roncalli, so far I know, never lived in an English-speaking country. His diplomatic posts were in Bulgaria, Turkey and France. In 1921, shortly before his appointment to Bulgaria, he travelled round northern Europe in order to see how missionary activity was funded and organised, but the countries visited were France, Belgium, Germany and Holland, not the British Isles or Ireland.[1] He was widely read and was a historian of some note but his interests lay in Catholic Europe – as editor of the *Atti* of St Charles Borromeo and lecturer on the historian Cesare Baronius, for example – rather than in the then still predominantly Protestant Anglo-Saxon world.[2] An interesting glimpse of his attitude to the latter world comes in the entry in his *Journal* for 29 April 1903, when as a young seminarian in Rome he recorded the visits of King Edward VII of England to King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy and to the elderly Pope Leo XIII. Having reflected on the pomp and ceremony of the two visits, musing 'Sic transit gloria mundi: Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas', he went on to write:

> Yet this man [King Edward VII], a Protestant, did one really good thing while he was in Rome. And it was this: showing himself superior to certain tendentious currents of anti-clericalism here and in other countries, in the height of his power he did not disdain, indeed he considered it an honour, to visit and pay homage to another man [Pope Leo XIII], a poor persecuted old man, whom

> he acknowledged to be greater than himself: the Pope, the Vicar of
> Jesus Christ . . . A highly significant event this, of a heretical King
> of Protestant England, which has persecuted the Catholic Church
> for more than three centuries, going in person to pay his respects to
> the poor old Pope, held like a prisoner in his own house.[3]

Pope Paul VI was more obviously inquisitive about the Anglo-Saxon world, especially England and the Anglican Church; even while his principal cultural love outside Italy remained France. In 1934, when *Monsignore* at the Secretariat of State, he spent part of his summer holidays visiting England and Scotland in the company of his Sicilian friend Mariano Rampolla da Tindaro (grand-nephew of the cardinal Rampolla, who nearly became pope) and Monsignor Antonio Riberi, who was counsellor at the nunciature in Dublin, Ireland. Montini was especially impressed by the medieval cathedrals of England, nine of which he and his companions visited; though while he admired their Gothic beauty he lamented that they were no longer Catholic; he noted that they had a feeling 'of emptiness, the great void in the absence of Christ, the priesthood and the faith'.[4] During the years of the Second World War, when Montini was Substitute Secretary of State, he enjoyed good relations with the British and US representatives to the Holy See, Francis Osborne and Myron Taylor, especially with Osborne. Both men were accommodated within the Vatican while their countries were at war with Italy.[5] During his years as Archbishop of Milan, Montini went out of his way to establish contact with Anglicans, notably inviting a party of five Anglican clergy as his personal guests for several days in 1955. This hospitality was greatly appreciated by the five clergymen and Geoffrey Fisher, archbishop of Canterbury, personally wrote to thank him.[6] Montini 'was already on the way to becoming the Anglicans' favourite [Catholic] archbishop', as Peter Hebblethwaite put it, or, as the Anglican historian Owen Chadwick said, he 'had more knowledge of English religion than any of his predecessors [as popes]'.[7] His good relations with the Anglican Communion developed further when he became pope, during the Vatican Council, and afterwards, culminating – at least in the public eye – with the visit in 1966 of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, as we shall see.

When it comes to how the Anglo-Saxon world viewed the two popes there are two initial points to bear in mind. First, Anglo-Saxons thought largely in generalities. One reason may simply be that the people of this newer world lacked the subtlety and sophistication of the older Latin world of Continental Europe – but I'll avoid the temptation to speculate on this delicate issue

here! Another reason is that the Anglo-Saxon world, still predominantly Protestant, was more distant from the papacy than were many Catholic or formerly Catholic countries. The state's relations with the papacy, and the interventions of the papacy in the affairs of the local church, had not impinged upon the large majority of inhabitants of Anglo-Saxon countries in the way that they had in Italy, France, Spain, Germany and other countries, both inside and outside Europe, with large or predominantly Catholic populations. Catholics in the Anglo-Saxon countries were well aware of the papacy, of course, and generally devoted to it, but for most other citizens the papacy was only felt at quite a distance and was rather marginal to their immediate concerns. This was compounded, it seems to me, by the papacy's own cautious attitude to these countries, especially towards their governments. Many of the countries – for example the USA, Britain, Australia – had sizeable and growing Catholic populations, even though they remained well short of a majority, whose continuing growth Rome did not wish to jeopardise. In other English-speaking countries, moreover, especially those that were or had been colonies of the British Empire, the freedom of Catholic missionaries to work in them depended much upon a benevolent, or at least non-hostile, attitude of the relevant governing authorities. As a result for almost a century before the accession of Pope John XXIII the papacy had been outwardly cautious, some would say almost deferential, towards the Anglo-Saxon political establishment. There was, therefore, distance or reserve also from the side of Rome.

The second consideration is that the two popes in question, and the Second Vatican Council, were viewed through Anglo-Saxon spectacles. This is an obvious but important point. In many ways it was a time of profound crisis in the Anglo-Saxon world, above all with the dismemberment of the British Empire. Yet confidence in Anglo-Saxon values and institutions was still strong, partly on account of the successes of the Allies in the Second World War, partly through conviction that these values and institutions alone could save the world from the menace of Communism, partly through a host of other factors. An obvious example of the spectacles was that Vatican II was often judged, at least subconsciously, in terms of the British Parliament or American Congress, institutions that were regarded as the apex of liberal democracy and of Anglo-Saxon values. Another more subtle lens was Anglo-Saxon interest in personality, some would say obsession with it. Interest in personality has been a marked feature of English literature at least since Geoffrey Chaucer in the Middle Ages, through William Shakespeare and the great novelists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as Jane Austen,

Charles Dickens and Graham Greene[8] – and on to the gossipy popular newspapers in the era of the two popes in question. This led to fascination with the personalities of John XXIII and Paul VI. Whether or not one agreed with the two popes, here were undoubtedly two very remarkable and interesting personalities. The scholastic dictum applies always and everywhere, *quidquid recipitur secundum modum recipientis recipitur*, but I think it is especially applicable to understanding how popes John and Paul were viewed in the Anglo-Saxon world.

Both the two considerations – that the Anglo-Saxons thought in generalities and saw through their own spectacles – applied especially to Pope John XXIII. His reign was short, less than five years, he was photogenic and appeared sympathetic in the media – his reign coincided with the growing popularity of television – and his pontificate became identified above all with the calling and early stages of the council. Here was a single snapshot, so to speak. Into it other more complex aspects of John's personality tended to become submerged or interpreted. Undoubtedly it was an overwhelmingly favourable picture.

There was the surprise in the Anglo-Saxon world at his election as pope at the advanced age of 76. Then, two days after his coronation as pope, he met the press, both Italian and international. He evidently charmed them, including the Anglo-Saxons, and thus set the tone for a generally happy relationship that was to endure.[9] His visits to two hospitals in Rome, Bambin' Gesu for children and Santo Spirito, on Christmas Day 1958, and especially his visit to Regina Caeli prison on the following day, created a very favourable impression that remained in the popular imagination.[10] In the next two and a half years he received three prominent Anglo-Saxon visitors: President Eisenhower of the United States of America in December 1959, Geoffrey Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury, in December 1960, and Queen Elizabeth II of England in May 1961. All three visits were successful and while that of Queen Elizabeth was not a 'first' – we have noted the earlier visit of King Edward VII to Pope Leo XIII and, at a slightly different level, there was Prime Minister Winston Churchill's meeting with Pope Pius XII in August 1944 – that of Archbishop Fisher was. It was the first meeting of an archbishop of Canterbury – the senior see in the Anglican Communion – with a pope since the Reformation. Despite some difficulties about how Fisher should be addressed – 'Dottore' was the title eventually settled upon – and a desire in some Roman circles to play down the significance of the visit, Fisher was favourably impressed by John and the visit was subsequently applauded in a long debate in the House of Lords in London.[11]

Anglo-Saxon interest in the council, and John's relationship with it, started, for the most part, when the council first met in October 1962 rather than beforehand. There seems to have been little anticipation of what the council would bring, though in this respect Anglo-Saxons were following the norm. Once it had begun, the council was well covered in the English-language media. Indeed it was from the media, both secular and religious, probably even more than directly from the bishops and other church authorities, that most people in the English-speaking world, Catholics as well as non-Catholics, learnt about the council and an abiding picture of it was built up. The most famous journalist was the Redemptorist priest Francis Xavier Murphy, who wrote under the pseudonym of Xavier Rynne (Rynne was his mother's maiden name) for fear that he was in breach of the council's rules of secrecy. His regular reports were first published in *The New Yorker*, and then quickly collected into book form, starting as *Letters from Vatican City*.[12] Robert Kaiser wrote reports for another popular North American magazine, *Time*, and published separately his account of the council's first session.[13] The British Catholic weekly *The Tablet* and most other Catholic newspapers in the English-speaking world also carried regular reports.

The dominant picture of Pope John in this story, at least so far as I can ascertain from my own memory and from a brief survey of the vast material, was undoubtedly very favourable: on account of his having summoned the council, his apparent openness to new ideas and movements or at least to new expressions of traditional ideas – the distinction was not always clear – and his support for freedom of speech. In all this we can see the obvious twin dangers of appropriating the council to Anglo-Saxon models, above all the British Parliament, which was seen by many as the model representative institution for the entire English-speaking world, and of projecting Pope John as a kind of good king who defended his people.[14] Catholics, moreover, tended to ape their non-Catholic peers. In many of the countries they were a growing minority now coming to the forefront of public affairs, most spectacularly with the election in 1960 of the Catholic John Kennedy as President of the USA, and as a result, not wishing to jeopardise this advance, were keen to refute any suggestions of disloyalty. Thus, many Catholics in England, especially among the middle classes, wanted to be more English than the English, so to speak, and likewise in the USA and other countries. The favourable media image of Pope John was signalled by his selection as 'Man of the Year' by *Time* magazine at the end of 1962. A tasteful drawing of him adorned the magazine's cover and a fulsome article proclaimed: 'To the entire world Pope John has given what neither diplomacy nor science could give: a sense of

the unity of the human family.'[15] Six months later, when it became apparent that his death was imminent, there followed for a week or so before he died an outpouring of grief worldwide – including notably in the Anglo-Saxon countries – that was and perhaps still is without parallel in history.

The image of John XXIII that has been presented is almost a still, a snapshot in time. I think this is the predominant image but there were of course some nuances and differences of opinion. I shall mention just a few of them: most reflected favourably on John, a few were negative. There were the inevitably concerns in various quarters that John was too weak towards the Left and Communism. The CIA (Central Intelligence Agency, the 'Secret Service', of USA), for example, expressed these fears regarding his social encyclical *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and there were fears in both Britain and USA that his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963) condemned their policies regarding nuclear weapons.[16] In general, however, John seems to have been well accepted in Anglo-Saxon diplomatic circles. His help in resolving the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962 was considerable and much appreciated by President Kennedy, though on account of the separation of Church and state in the USA, it was kept largely out of the public view.[17] His good relations with the Protestant observers at Vatican II, many of whom came from the Anglo-Saxon world, should be mentioned. Dr Joseph Jackson, president of the National Baptist Convention in the USA, Dr Douglas Horton, representing the International Congregational Council, and the Anglican bishop John Moorman, recorded their favourable impressions when Pope John met all the observers together at the start of the council. In Moorman's words, 'We found a kind-hearted, friendly old man, obviously pleased to have us with him at the council'.[18] Some Catholic bishops were more ambivalent. John Heenan, who was archbishop of Liverpool during John's reign and subsequently became cardinal archbishop of Westminster, rejected the common view of Pope John as a progressive liberal and saw him rather as a simple man, 'more like a benevolent parish priest. I doubt if he had read many of the books of contemporary theologians'.[19]

Differences of opinion regarding Pope John inevitably surfaced more openly in the years after the council. Nevertheless it is probably true to say that the predominant and very favourable opinion of him, both personally and as pope, continued to prevail in the Anglo-Saxon world. Two publications that became best-sellers helped this greatly: *Journal of a Soul*, the English translation of John's *Il Giornale dell'Anima*, and Peter Hebblethwaite's biography, which was first published in 1984 and quickly established itself as the best-known book on the pope in English.[20] Both works also helped to

preserve what might be called a middle line of interpretation in the Anglo-Saxon world, avoiding the extremes of those who wished to denigrate or minimalise the importance of Pope John and of those who wished to establish him as a more conscious revolutionary with a clearly thought-out plan for the council. This middle line is well illustrated by the North American scholar Joseph Komonchak in his long chapter in the recent *History of Vatican II*.[21]

When we turn to Pope Paul, the picture is obviously more complex. His papacy was more than three times longer than John's and he had to face a correspondingly larger number of issues. It was not possible for the media or popular imagination to squeeze him into a single image or frame. Regarding the council, too, Paul had three difficult years of its coming to maturity and a conclusion, whereas John had the one opening year. All this is obvious and there was nothing peculiarly Anglo-Saxon about it. There was also the question of whether Paul's character was more complex than John's, a topic that specially interested Anglo-Saxons with their fascination with human personality. That Roncalli himself was widely believed to have used the character of Hamlet from the play of that name by England's best-known writer, William Shakespeare, to describe Montini certainly caught the Anglo-Saxon imagination: *Amletico* or Hamlet-like, he was said to have called him, looking in two directions or, perhaps better, seeing all sides of a question and therefore hesitant.[22]

To begin with Paul during the last three years of the council, the image of him in the Anglo-Saxon world was undoubtedly favourable. Reading the reports of Xavier Rynne and other journalists, plenty of criticisms can be found of Paul's actions and interventions during this time: yielding too much to the so-called curial conservatives; his intervention regarding the *Nota praevia* to the decree on the Church, *Lumen gentium*; his postponement at the end of the third session of the council of the voting on two decrees particularly close to Anglo-Saxon concerns, those on Ecumenism and Religious Freedom; Paul's encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* and his declaration of Mary as Mother of the Church, which were judged by some to be intruding unnecessarily upon the work of the council; his removal of the two issues of birth control and priestly celibacy from the council's discussion; his concern for papal authority contrasting with the apparently more relaxed attitude of his predecessor.

But it would be a mistake to focus too much on these particular criticisms. Robust debate and freedom of expression were prized Anglo-Saxons virtues, at least in theory. The remarkable overall achievement of the council, and Paul's role in it, were appreciated much more than the inevitable hiccups along the way. Maybe there was a sense that the Catholic Church, which had

not previously been noted for its democratic ways, had produced a council that achieved far more than any British Parliament or American Congress could have and Pope Paul had played a crucial role in this remarkable success. During these years, too, Paul had taken several extra-conciliar initiatives that were warmly applauded in the English-speaking world, notably his visits to the Holy Land, to India, and to the United Nations. On some particular points, moreover, on which he had incurred criticism, he was proved to be right. Thus, it was generally recognised that his postponement of the votes on Ecumenism and Religious Freedom towards the end of the council's third session had proved beneficial. John Courtney Murray SJ, a principal architect of the decree on Religious Freedom, acknowledged that the delay resulted in a better decree.[23]

Altogether, then, the three years of the council were seen in the Anglo-Saxon world as quite a triumph for Paul VI. Some thorny issues that troubled the council had largely bypassed the Anglophone world: the scriptural, ecclesiological and other theological debates of Continental Europe in the 1950s; worker priests and various social issues; Church–state relations; the experience of Communist regimes. In general, too, the pope was seen as less central to the council than in countries where the papacy was felt more closely. This, I think, is another aspect of the distance from the papacy in the Anglophone world, and the tendency to see the council in terms of the British parliamentary model, mentioned earlier. In other words, the council dominated the scene and was seen as more or less autonomous, while the pope's role was quite secondary. This approach prevented seeing the council too much in terms of pope *versus* council. Regarding the main decrees that impinged on the Anglo-Saxon world there was general satisfaction as well as with Pope Paul's handling of them: those on the liturgy, Revelation, ecumenism and religious freedom – which were the main two decrees in which Anglo-Saxons played roles of leadership – and the two decrees on the Church.[24]

After the council and its immediate honeymoon period, the image of Pope Paul became more complex. It depended more upon who you asked. The encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in 1968 was a watershed. The Anglo-Saxon world focused almost exclusively on a single point in the encyclical, concluding that the birth-control pill, which was in widespread use among Catholic women, was henceforth banned. There was extensive – apparently majority – dissent from the encyclical, something that had never occurred before among Catholics in these countries.[25] The disciplining and suspension of priests who spoke out against the encyclical caused much pain. It, and implicitly Paul himself, came to be blamed for departures from the priesthood and

declining vocations to it, and, even more seriously, of the loss of a generation of Catholics and potential converts, especially among the educated and middle classes, who had seemed favourably disposed to the Church as a result of Vatican II.

Besides the teaching of the encyclical, questions of methodology and ecclesiology, which had been voiced already, surfaced more openly. Why had Paul removed the question of birth control from the council, was it a wise or proper move to reserve the decision to himself? Why had he then gone against the advice of the majority on the Commission that he had appointed to investigate the issue?; was he within his rights to do so? Once again, Anglo-Saxon lenses can be detected: exaltation of freedom of discussion and the parliamentary model for debate and the settling of disputes, as against an implied more authoritarian model. Feminist concerns also surfaced. Was it right for an issue so intimately affecting women to be decided by a man and his largely male advisors? There was also the difference of approach to law: 'Common Law' was the basic legal framework throughout the Anglo-Saxon world, indeed in much of the wider English-speaking world, due especially to the influence of Britain's legal traditions in her former imperial territories, and it emphasised personal freedom and 'custom' – what people actually did – as basic to law; *versus* what was seen, at least in Anglo-Saxon eyes, as the more authoritarian or 'from above' approach of the Napoleonic and other codes of Continental Europe, a model that the Catholic Church seemed to follow, as exemplified both by its Code of Canon Law and, more particularly, by the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.

The encyclical found some supporters and others argued that even if its arguments had not been well presented, Paul would eventually be seen as a prophet. But these were minority voices and Paul came to be seen in his last decade as a rather sad figure who had lost confidence. The contrast between him and Pope John grew in the popular imagination.

This was the overall impression and it is obviously an important facet of the picture. On the other hand, Paul remained widely respected as a person and those who came to know him more closely continued to admire him, almost without exception it seems. The fact that he never wrote another encyclical, though seen as part of the sadness that was descending upon him, was accepted by many as a sign of humility, as was the fact that he did not urge the infallibility of *Humanae Vitae*. His relations with anglophone governments generally remained very good, though the separation of Church and state in some countries, and the desire in other largely Protestant countries not to be seen to be influenced by the papacy, meant that these good relations received

little publicity. President Johnson of the USA had a particularly high regard for him and is known to have sought his advice on various occasions. Both Johnson and his successor, Richard Nixon, visited Pope Paul in the Vatican.[26]

His already good relations with the Anglican Church developed further during his papacy. Two of the Anglican 'observers' at Vatican II enjoyed a particularly cordial relationship with Paul: Canon Bernard Pawley, who had been one of the party of Anglican clergymen who visited him in Milan in 1956, and John Moorman, bishop of Ripon.[27] The subsequent highlight was Michael Ramsey's successful visit as archbishop of Canterbury to Pope Paul in 1966. Specially moving for Ramsey was Paul's gift to him of the episcopal ring that the city of Milan had given him as archbishop.[28] Even difficult situations seemed to be turned to advantage. The canonisation of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales in 1970 was a sensitive issue inasmuch as the English government in the Reformation era had executed them as both heretics and traitors. Yet in his homily for the occasion, Paul added the exquisite touch of referring to the Anglican Church as the Roman Catholic Church's 'ever-beloved sister' and acknowledging her 'legitimate prestige and worthy patrimony of piety and usage'.[29] When Ramsey's successor, Donald Coggan, visited him in 1977 Paul added a further gratifying nuance by speaking of reunion in which the Anglican Church would be 'united not absorbed'.[30] Even the boycotting of an ecumenical service by the Anglican archbishop of Sydney during Paul's visit to Australia in 1970 seems to have backfired and won for Paul much general sympathy.[31]

Among individuals who appreciated Paul's warmth and sensitivity, the novelist Graham Greene has already been mentioned. Betty Friedan, the American feminist and author of *The Feminist Mystique*, told Paul at a private audience in 1974 that he had 'done more to give women a voice' than any previous pope and she was struck by his personal attention, 'he seemed strangely intent, curious, interested in this meeting, which was going on much longer than anyone had given me reason to expect'.[32] Peter Nichols wrote in *The Times* of London, after meeting the pope during the Jubilee Year of 1975, that his 'manner is gentle, rather tense but kindly . . . the smaller the occasion, the more natural and impressive he is. But he loves crowds, and loves contact with throngs of enthusiastic faithful'.[33]

Moving beyond the Anglo-Saxon to the wider Anglophone world, notable was Paul's successful visit to Uganda in 1969, where he was warmly received by President Milton Obote and the presidents of neighbouring states – including the Catholic president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere – as well as by the people of Uganda, where he encouraged appropriate inculturation

and pluralism, the development of an African Christianity, and visited the shrine of the 22 Ugandan Martyrs whom he had canonised in 1964; and his visits to Asian countries in 1970, which included Pakistan, the Philippines, Samoa, Australia, Hong Kong and Sri Lanka.[34] Mention should also be made of the publication in 1993 of Peter Hebblethwaite's biography of Pope Paul – following his earlier biography of John XXIII – which is the best-known biography of Paul in the English-speaking world and has done much to enhance further his reputation.[35]

In conclusion, one notes again the different characters of Roncalli and Montini and the different situations in which they found themselves as popes; differences that were appreciated by the Anglo-Saxon and the wider English-speaking world. Both men were widely respected as close to God and doing their best in varying and often difficult circumstances. John XXIII, 'Good Pope John' as he became known, was the more obviously popular figure, though people recognised there was an element of luck in his popularity: a short reign, many popular and imaginative initiatives, a timely death. More sadness and controversy surrounded the image of Pope Paul, mainly from the time of *Humanae Vitae* onwards, yet he remained widely respected and became what might be called 'a pope for connoisseurs' as his actions and initiatives gradually became uncovered and better understood.

Greek Metaphysics and the Language of the Early Church Councils: Nicaea I (325) to Nicaea II (787)

Christianity was born into the world of Greek culture. Greek was by far the most widely used language of communication, especially in terms of cultural and intellectual discourse, during and for long after the life on earth of Jesus Christ, within the lands inside and bordering the eastern Mediterranean; within, therefore, most of the countries that were to prove fundamental to the early spread of Christianity.

The early Christian church had the courage to recognise and act upon this linguistic and cultural reality. Greek was chosen as the language of the New Testament, the collection of writings that formed the authoritative statement of Christianity. All 27 books that came to be recognised as forming the canon of the New Testament were written in, or translated into, Greek. The *Septuagint* translation of the Old Testament into Greek had been made in the third to first centuries BC. The languages closer to Jesus Christ and the early disciples – Aramaic, Hebrew and Syriac – were largely left behind by Christians. Greek, moreover, was the principal theological language of the early Church. Aphrahat and Ephraem wrote in Syriac, Tertullian mainly in Latin, and Augustine of Hippo, the giant of Western theology, also in Latin. But most of the leading theologians of the first five centuries of the Christian era wrote, and presumably thought, in Greek.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Greek was the language of the first seven ecumenical councils, the focus of this paper. These councils, from Nicaea I in 325 to Nicaea II in 787, were crucial to the development – or

perhaps more accurately, the clarification – of Christian doctrine during the first millennium. In this case, the Church had no real option but to accept Greek since it was the only common language in the eastern half of the (Roman) Empire where all seven councils were held. Even so, the courage of the council members in embracing this already highly developed and fundamentally non-Christian language as the principal vehicle for the Christian message is remarkable.

That Greek had developed a sophisticated philosophical vocabulary requires no comment here. Aristotle and Plato remained the most highly regarded philosophers throughout the first millennium of the Christian era. In the third century of the same era, not long before the first Council of Nicaea, both Plotinus and Porphyry, who wrote in Greek, showed the continuing vigour and adaptability of Plato's philosophy and the suitability of the Greek language to express intellectual and theological concepts.

These were basic facts of language that confronted the 250 to 300 bishops (the traditional figure of 318 comes from Athanasius) who assembled in 325 at the imperial palace in Nicaea, near Constantinople, to respond to the teaching of the Egyptian priest Arius regarding the divinity of Jesus Christ. The council would soon come to be counted as the first ecumenical council, that is, the first council of the whole church, of the whole *ecumene*. How could this most central of Christian mysteries – the divinity of Christ – be expressed in summary form in the Greek language; what words should be chosen to express the relationship between Father and Son? We are so familiar with the results that we may lose our sense of wonder and marvel at the process.

In the creed produced by the Council of Nicaea in 325, the most notable inclusion, linguistically, is the word ὁμοούσιος. The Son is ὁμοούσιος, consubstantial, with the Father. The word is not found in the Bible; neither in the Greek New Testament nor in the *Septuagint* translation of the Old Testament. It is the word in the creed that may be described most obviously as non-Biblical, from a linguistic point of view. Was the Church selling out its Biblical roots to Greek metaphysics? No minutes of the council's proceedings survive – very likely they never existed – and the accounts of participants at the council that do survive, principally those of Eusebius of Caesarea and Athanasius, do not give a clear account of why the word was introduced. So we are rather left guessing on this subject. The most obvious reason for the introduction of this word, it seems to me, is that Arius, in the profession of faith that he submitted to his bishop, Alexander of Alexandria, in around 320, had explicitly denied that the Son was ὁμοούσιος (consubstantial) with the Father. By approving the word, the Council of Nicaea was 'nailing' Arius.

In other respects the prehistory of ὁμοούσιος before the year 325, to express the relationship between Father and Son, is somewhat ambiguous. The use of the word in a similar context had been condemned by one or more councils at Antioch in the 260s, during the trials of Paul of Samosata (Paul's own attitude to the term is unclear). It may well be that Arius had in mind this condemnation when he himself explicitly rejected the same word ὁμοούσιος in the profession of faith he submitted to Bishop Alexander. Antioch's condemnation(s) would later prove embarrassing to Nicaea's approval of the word, so the explanation was developed that Antioch had condemned consubstantiality in a material sense, whereas Nicaea intended it in a spiritual sense. On the other hand, it seems probable (the evidence is not altogether clear) that Pope Dionysius (260–68) recommended ὁμοούσιος as properly expressing the relationship between Father and Son, in his correspondence with Bishop Dionysius of Alexandria. What is clear is that the word had enjoyed something of a tradition in Christian theology – albeit a somewhat shadowy one – for a long time before the Council of Nicaea. While there are occasional uses of ὁμοούσιος (in other contexts) in the writings of Porphyry, Plotinus and a few other classical writers,[1] it cannot be considered a word of major importance in Greek philosophy. Rather than prostituting the Church to pagan philosophy, therefore, the Council of Nicaea may be seen as edging forward cautiously and determinedly in a delicate situation.

Our second example comes in the anathemas that the same first Council of Nicaea appended to its creed. The anathemas were obviously directed against Arius, even though he was not mentioned by name. One of them anathematises anyone who asserts that the Son 'came from another (i.e., other than the Father) hypostasis/substance or being', ἐξ ἑτέρας ὑπόστασις ἤ οὐσίας. Here the two words ὑπόστασις and οὐσια appear to be considered virtually synonymous, yet later they will be distinguished clearly and very significantly: οὐσια for the one 'being' of God; ὑπόστασις for the three 'persons' of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Both words had been used as semi-technical terms in Greek philosophy, yet their meanings were not restricted to philosophical usage. Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon* makes the point very clearly in giving the following range of meanings for ὑπόστασις: support, resistance, lying in ambush, jelly or thick soup, sediment in liquids, origin, foundation, substructure, confidence, courage, resolution, steadfastness, promise, substance, reality or nature, wealth or property! It would be wrong, therefore, to see the Council of Nicaea as infatuated with the language of Greek metaphysics. Rather the council was edging forward quite cautiously with its terminology within the context of the now prevalent Greek language.

Greek, indeed, was a rather flexible, even malleable, language. Such flexibility was an advantage for the early Church inasmuch as it provided time and space to adapt the language to the new demands of Christian theological vocabulary.

Our third case study comes from the Church's third and fourth ecumenical councils, Ephesus in 431 and Chalcedon 20 years later in 451. The formula that eventually emerged from the two councils is famous. In English it is usually rendered as, Christ is one 'person' in two 'natures', divine and human. In most other Western languages the wording is similar. The apparent simplicity of the statement belies the labours that went into it. The word 'person' is a somewhat inadequate translation of the two words that appear alongside each other in the Greek original of Chalcedon's decree, ὑπόστασις and πρόσωπον. We have already encountered ὑπόστασις in the appendix of Nicaea's creed. There it seems best translated as 'hypostasis' or 'substance'; literally that which 'stands' (στάσις) 'under' (ὑπό). Now in Chalcedon the same word may be translated better as 'inner person'. Whereas πρόσωπον is rather the outer person, πρόσ ('towards') and ὥπον ('what is seen', deriving from ὄψομαι 'I see'); one of the various meanings of the word πρόσωπον is the mask worn by an actor.

As a conservative, I recommend keeping the word 'person' in language about Christ and the Holy Trinity, in view of the word's very long usage in the Western church. Nevertheless it is important to acknowledge the limitation of the word, indeed its insufficiency either to express the full reality of the mystery of Christ, obviously, or to express the meaning of the Greek words used in the original text. These warnings were being made at the time of the council and beforehand. Augustine of Hippo, for example, was uneasy about using the Latin word *persona* in the context of Christ and the Trinity, but he couldn't see a better alternative. Other Western writers followed Augustine in this cautious approach. Latin, indeed, served as an invaluable linguistic handmaid because it had the single word *persona*, whereas Greek has no single word to express the concept of person, rather a plethora of words – ὑπόστασις and πρόσωπον are among the most important – that express various aspects of the person. In recent times various theologians have advocated other translations of ὑπόστασις. Karl Rahner suggested 'modes of subsistence', von Balthasar 'modes of being'. They may be more accurate translations, especially Rahner's 'modes of subsistence', but they lack the immediate intelligibility of 'person'.

The word φύσις, the third of the crucial words in the definition of Chalcedon, seems readily translatable as 'nature'. But at the time of the council there was considerable overlap between its meaning and the meanings

of both πρόσωπον and ὑπόστασις, especially the latter – as Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon* quickly reveals. There may be some sympathy for the theologians of Alexandria who felt that one ὑπόστασις entailed one φύσις, hence monophysitism.

Even more significant than these issues of translation is the fact that the Church, at the time of the first four ecumenical councils, far from prostituting itself before Greek philosophy, was indeed forging important developments in the Greek language, so that the language could cope with the mysteries of Christianity and its new teaching about the dignity of the human person. In this sense the Church was leading the way in the development of the Greek language, and indeed of Greek thought, rather than showing itself merely passive and submissive. This development, and the influence of Christianity, can be seen well by tracing key words through Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon* into G.W.H. Lampe's *Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford, 1961 and reprints), including the words that have been examined above: ὁμοούσιος, οὐσία, ὑπόστασις, πρόσωπον and φύσις.

The development is most dramatic with ὑπόστασις and πρόσωπον. So much so, indeed, that we can say that Christianity, in a sense, invented the concept of the human person. There was no clear word in classical Greek for 'person', only a variety of words that expressed various aspects, as we have seen. Latin, it is true, had the single word *persona*, but it was used principally as a juridical concept – a word to categorise in law a particular group of subjects, namely human beings. Persons themselves were more divided than united in Roman society, divided into slaves and free, citizens and non-citizens, men and women, and so on: radical divisions. Experience of living in missionary countries suggests to me that the situation was similar in many languages. That is to say, normally a language had no single clear word referring the human person as such: rather a variety of words that expressed particular aspects. Usually, through Christian missionaries and Western influence, a single word was eventually chosen to represent the human person, but this was the result of Christian influence, direct or indirect, rather than representing the original situation. The development parallels the situation in Greek, as outlined above. The decisive influence was Christ assuming our humanity, thereby giving essential dignity and the promise of immortality to every man and woman, and the Church proclaiming this good news.

Fourth and finally, we may note the language of the fifth to seventh ecumenical councils: Constantinople II in 553, Constantinople III in 680–81 and Nicaea II in 787. With these councils, the important developments were not so much that the Church minted more Greek words into the core of Christian

theological vocabulary – though words had to be found to express Christ's divine and human wills, in the case of Constantinople III, and the reverence due to Christian works of art, in the case of Nicaea II – rather that they confirmed the usage of the key words that we have already looked at. In their doctrinal definitions, the three councils canonised the Christian interpretation and usage of the Greek words for 'consubstantial', 'person' and 'nature' as they had emerged at the Council of Chalcedon. The confirmations were important and have strengthened the Church ever since.

Adolph Harnack, writing a century ago, made famous the view that early Semitic Christianity quickly sold out to Greek philosophy, to Christianity's great and lasting disadvantage. In a modified form the line of argument received a large measure of acceptance; it has been challenged principally by Biblical scholars – notably C.H. Dodd among Anglophone writers. More recently, in a somewhat similar vein, many Asian theologians have argued that Christianity in Western clothing, rooted in Greek culture and philosophy, has come to dominate well beyond the West and indeed has been allowed to parade as normative for the whole Church. Generally they seek liberation from this domination. I recognise the importance of the Greek language in the early history of Christianity, but see the results in a more positive and liberating light. Acceptance of Greek, the *lingua franca* of the eastern Mediterranean world, allowed Christianity rapidly to become a world religion, able to reach a very wide audience. Rather than being tied down or enslaved by the language, the Christian church, at the highest level of ecumenical councils, was remarkably inventive and creative. It forged from the Greek language a specifically Christian vocabulary, one that was open to developments in the future. In these ways the early councils present a model of fidelity and creativity for the Church today.

Publications on Church Councils by Norman Tanner

Note

AF = also to be found in *The Ages of Faith* (I.B.Tauris, 2009)
* = reproduced in the present work

Books

Editor of *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols (London: Sheed and Ward /Continuum; Georgetown University Press, Washington USA, 1990 and reprints).

Co-author (and author of chapter 5 'La Chiesa nelle società: *ecclesia ad extra*', pp. 293–415) of vol. 4 (entitled: La chiesa come comunione: Il terzo periodo e la terza intersessione, settembre 1964–settembre 1965) of *Storia del Concilio Vaticano II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1995–2001). English version: *History of Vatican II*, ed. G. Alberigo and J.A. Komonchak, vol. 4 (2003). Also translations, realised or forthcoming, into French, German, Spanish, Portuguese/Brazilian, and Russian.

The Councils of the Church: A Short History (New York: Crossroad, 2001). Also in Italian, *I Concili della Chiesa* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1999); French, *Conciles et synodes* (Paris: Cerf, 2000); Spanish, *Los concilios de la Iglesia: Breve historia* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2003); Indonesian, *Konsili Konsili Gereja: Sebuah Sejarah Singkat* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Kanisius, 2003); Japanese (Tokyo: Kyo Bun Kwan, 2003); Korean (Seoul: Catholic Publisher Company, 2010).

Is the Church too Asian? Reflections on the Ecumenical Councils (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002).*

Was the Church too Democratic? Councils, Collegiality and the Church's Future (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2003).*

The Church and the World: Gaudium et Spes, Inter Mirifica. Rediscovering Vatican II (Mahwah NJ, Paulist Press, 2005).

Articles

'Medieval Crusade Decrees and Ignatius's Meditation on the Kingdom', *Heythrop Journal*, xxxi (1990), pp. 505–15. *AF*

'The African Church and the First Five Ecumenical Councils', *Afer: African Ecclesial Review*, xxxiii (1991), pp. 201–13.* French translation: 'L'Eglise d'Afrique et les cinq premiers conciles oecuméniques', in *Deuxième assemblée spéciale pour l'Afrique*, eds Edoh F Bedjra and Léon Ngoy Kalumba (Abidjan: Les Editions du CERAP, 2008), pp. 87–98.

'Reception of the First Seven Ecumenical Councils by Medieval and Later General Councils of the Western Church', *Studia Patristica*, vol. 39 (1997), ed. E. Livingstone, pp. 148–52. *AF*

'The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215', in G. Evans (ed.), *A History of Pastoral Care* (London and New York: Cassell, 2000), pp. 112–15. *AF*

Articles on 'Council of Florence' and 'Council of Trent' in *Oxford Companion to Christian Theology*, ed. Adrian Hastings (Oxford University Press, 2000). *AF*

'The Eucharist in the Ecumenical Councils', *Gregorianum*, 82 (2001), pp. 37–49.*

'Mary in the Ecumenical Councils of the Church', in W.M. McLoughlin and J. Pinnock (eds), *Mary for Earth and Heaven* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2002), pp. 156–67.*

'Historiography of the Council (Vatican II) in the Anglo-Saxon World/La storiografia del concilio: l'area anglosassone', *Centro Vaticano II: Bollettino semestrale del 'Centro Studi e Ricerche sul Concilio Vaticano II'*, 2 (2002), pp. 47–54.*

'Regional Councils', *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies*, 6, no. 1 (January 2003), pp. 141–53. Reproduced (with adaptations) in *Was the Church too Democratic?*, chapter 2.*

'Ecumenism and the Ecumenical Councils', *Hekima Review*, 29 (May 2003), pp. 7–19.*

'The Book of the Councils: Nicaea I to Vatican II', in *The Church and the Book*, ed. R.N. Swanson, Studies in Church History, 38 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004), pp. 11–21.*

'Ecumenical Councils and Non-Christian Religions', in *Encounters with the Word: Essays to Honour Aloysius Pieris SJ on his 70th Birthday*, ed. R. Cruse, M. Fernando and A. Tilakaratne (Colombo: Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue, and Aachen: Missionswissenschaftliches Institut Missio e. V., 2004), pp. 433–45.*

'The image of John XXIII and Paul VI in the Anglo-Saxon World during and after Vatican II', *Centro Vaticano II: Ricerche e Documenti* (Rome: Lateran University), iv.1 (2004), pp. 65–79.*

Articles 'Florence, Council of' and 'Trent, Council of', in *Renaissance and Reformation*, ed. James A. Patrick (Marshall Cavendish, 2007), pp. 427–32 and 1352–64.

'L'Eglise d'Afrique . . .' (2008), see above 'The African Church . . .' (1991).

'Greek Metaphysics and the Language of the Early Church Councils: Nicaea I (325) to Nicaea II (787)', *Gregorianum*, 90 (2009), pp. 51–7.*

Notes

Chapter 1: The Early Church

1 Two councils whose ecumenical status is disputed will be left out of consideration: Trullo in 692 and Constantinople IV in 869–70. The Council of Trullo, or 'in Trullo' (called thus because it was held in the domed hall (ἐν τῷ τρούλλῳ) of the emperor's palace in Constantinople), which promulgated 102 decrees of a mostly disciplinary nature, forming the basis of the canon law of the Eastern church, is regarded as ecumenical in the East. (Though usually it is seen as the completion of the fifth and sixth ecumenical councils of Constantinople II and III – which issued no disciplinary canons – and hence its other name of 'Quinisext', rather than as a separate council.) Its status in the West has been disputed but since the early Middle Ages it has usually been omitted from the list of ecumenical councils. On the other hand, the fourth Council of Constantinople in 869–70, whose principal business was the deposition of Patriarch Photius of Constantinople, has for long been included among the ecumenical councils in the West but is not regarded as ecumenical by the Eastern church. In recent years the ecumenicity of both councils has been re-examined especially by Western scholars, for the most part leading to an acceptance of the arguments of the Eastern church in both cases. For a brief discussion of the issues see Tanner, *Councils*, pp. 41–3. For Trullo, see especially G. Nedungatt and M. Featherstone (eds), *The Council of Trullo Revisited*, Kanonika, 6 (Rome, 1995).

2 *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (15th edition, printing of 1992), vol. 14 (Macropedia), p. 128 (Asia).

3 I. Ortiz de Urbina, *Nicée et Constantinople*, Histoire des conciles oecuméniques, ed. G. Dumeige, vol. 1 (Paris, 1963), pp. 300–301 (map); E. Honigmann, 'The original lists of the members of the Council of Nicaea, the Robber Synod and the Council of Chalcedon', *Byzantion*, 16 (1942–3), p. 22; *DTC*, xi, cols 402–3.

4 Urbina, *Nicée et Constantinople*, p. 170; *DTC*, iii, col.1228.

5 *DTC*, ii, cols 2192. iii, cols 1236, 1266, v, cols 142–3, xi, cols 419–20; Honigmann, 'Original Lists', p. 62.

6 Biographical details of these emperors and empresses may conveniently be found in their entries in *EEC* and *ODB*.

7   M.L. West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971); idem, *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1997); W. Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (Harvard University Press, 1992). See also E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (University of California Press, 1959).

8   Kelly, *Creeds*, pp. 205–30.

9   Kelly, *Creeds*, pp. 242–54; R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–381* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp. 190–202; Urbina, *Nicée et Constantinople*, pp. 82–7.

10   Urbina, *Nicée et Constantinople*, p. 95; *Decrees*, i, notes on pp. 6–16.

11   *Decrees*, i, pp. 6–16. The canons entered the Western church principally through Dionysius Exiguus's translation of them into Latin in the early sixth century.

12   Kelly, *Creeds*, pp. 296–344; Hanson, *Search for the Christian Doctrine*, pp. 791–823; Urbina, *Nicée et Constantinople*, pp. 182–205.

13   Kelly, *Creeds*, pp. 358–67. However, Peter Bruns has recently published the important discovery that the equivalent of 'Filioque' ('and from the Son') may have been introduced into the creed by a much earlier eastern council, that held around 410 in Seleucia-Ctesiphon in Persia: *Annuarium Historiae Conciliorum*, 32 (2000), pp. 10–11.

14   For the Council of Ephesus and the schools of Antioch and Alexandria see: Grillmeier, *Christ*, i, pp. 443–87; Jedin, *History*, ii, pp. 93–111; H. Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 515–39.

15   B. Colless, 'The Traders of the Pearl: The Mercantile and Missionary Activities of Persian and Armenian Christians in South-East Asia', Part 2 'The Malay Peninsula', *Abr-Nahrain*, ix (1969–70), pp. 105 ff.

16   P.R. Brown, 'The Diffusion of Manichaeism in the Roman Empire', *Journal of Roman Studies*, lix (1969), pp. 92–103, reprinted in his *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London, 1972), pp. 94–118 (see especially pp. 97, 106–7 and 110). Of the many works by S.N.C. Lieu on Manichaeism, see especially *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China* (Manchester University Press, 1985), and *Manichaeism in Central Asia and China* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), see especially pp. xx–xxi and 204–7.

     On Christianity in Asia, see also: J.S. Trimingham, *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times* (London and Beirut: Longmans and Librarie du Liban, 1975 and 1990); Leslie W. Brown, *The Indian Christians of St Thomas: An Account of the Ancient Syrian Church of Malabar* (2nd edn, Cambridge University Press, 1982); A.M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol. 1. *From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century* (Bangalore: Church History Association of India, 1984, reprinted 1989); R. Le Coz, *L'Église d'Orient: Chrétiens d'Irak, d'Iran et de Turquie* (Paris: Cerf, 1995); J.M. Fiey, *Communautés Syriaques en Iran et Irak*

des Origines à 1552 (London, Variorum Reprints, 1979); S.H. Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, vol. 1, *Beginnings to 1550* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992; revised edn, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998); I. Gillman and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Christians in Asia before 1500* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1999); Martin Palmer, *The Jesus Sutras: Rediscovering the Lost Religion of Taoist Christianity* (London: Piatkus, 2001). I thank Dr Anthony O'Mahony of Heythrop College, London, for most of these references.

17   For Chalcedon see: Grillmeier, *Christ*, i, pp. 543–57; Jedin, *History*, ii, pp. 114–21; *Decrees*, i, pp. 75–6 and 83–7. Chadwick, *Church in Ancient Society*, pp. 570–83.

18   *Decrees*, i. pp. 107–13; Grillmeier, *Christ*, ii, part 2, pp. 438–62.

19   *Decrees*, i, pp. 124–30.

20   See *EEC* and *ODB* under 'Sophronius' and 'Maximus the Confessor'.

21   *ODB*, ii, pp. 975–7 'Iconoclasm'; *Decrees*, i, pp. 133–7.

22   Jedin, *History*, ii, pp. 103–7 and 114–21; *Decrees*, i, pp. 83–7.

23   Jedin, *History*, ii, pp. 457–8 and 634–5, and iii, pp. 34–6.

Chapter 2: Middle Ages and Trent

1   *Decrees*, i, p. 442.

2   V. Peri, 'Il numero dei concili ecumenici nella tradizione cattolica moderna', *Aevum,* 37 (1963), pp. 473–5; L. Bermejo, *Church, Conciliarity and Communion* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1990), pp. 77–8.

3   Tanner, *Councils*, pp. 7–8 and 49–50.

4   Y. Congar, 'Structures ecclésiales et conciles dans les relations entre Orient et Occident', *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 58 (1974), pp. 355–90. See also the earlier article of V. Peri, mentioned in the previous footnote but one.

5   *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*. 66 (1974), p. 620.

6   J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), pp. 198–200 (lecture originally delivered in Graz, Austria, in 1976). He later drew back somewhat from the conclusion: *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (Slough: St Paul Publications, 1988), pp. 80–83.

7   *Decrees*, i, pp. 187–225. The distinction between doctrine and discipline or morals is used here in a common sense way, bearing in mind that they cannot be entirely separated.

8   Ibid., i, pp. 230–71.

9   Ibid., i, pp. 278–301.

10   Ibid., i, pp. 309–31.

11   J. Neuner and J. Dupuis (eds), *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (2nd edn, London: Collins, 1983), pp. 16–20.

12   *Decrees*, i, pp. 336–401, and ii, pp. 1150–51.

13   Ibid., i, pp. 411–16 and 421–31.

14   Ibid., i, pp. 523–8, 534–59, 567–83 and 586–90.

15   Ibid., i, p. 578.

16   Ibid., i, p. 549.

17   Neuner and Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, p. 506, no. 1737 (3858).

18   *Decrees*, i, pp. 595–655 (pp. 605–6 for the doctrinal decree).

19   Ibid., i, p. 297.

20   Ibid., i, p. 442.

21   Ibid., i, pp. 191–2, 267–71, 297–301, 309–12, 350–54, 609–14 and 650–55; N. Tanner, 'Medieval Crusade Decrees and Ignatius's Meditation on the Kingdom', *The Heythrop Journal*, 31 (1990), pp. 505–15.

22   *Decrees*, i, p. 268.

23   Ibid., i, pp. 233–4.

24   Ibid., i, pp. 380–83.

25   Ibid., i, pp. 265–7.

26   Ibid., ii, p. 662.

27   Ibid., ii, p. 663.

28   Ibid., ii, p. 663.

29   Ibid., ii, pp. 671–81.

30   Neuner and Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, p. 19, no. 28 (860); *Decrees*, i, pp. 540–50, and ii, pp. 684–6, 693–713, 726–8, 732–7, 741–4 and 753–9.

31   *Decrees*, ii, pp. 686–9, 714–18, 744–53, 759–73, 776–84 and 784–96.

Chapter 3: Vatican I and II

1   *Decrees*, ii, pp. 808–9.

2   Ibid., ii, pp. 816.

3   Chapter 2 of Vatican II's decree on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, is entitled 'The people of God'.

4   *Decrees*, ii, pp. 813–15.

5   Ibid., ii, p. 802.

6   Jedin, *History*, viii, p. 323.

7   K. Schatz, *Vaticanum I, 1869–70* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1992–4), ii, pp. 16–17; Jedin, *History*, viii, p. 318.

8   Schatz *Vaticanum I*, ii, p. 18.

9   Ibid., ii, pp. 53–4.

10   Schatz, *Vaticanum I*, ii, pp. 53–5.

11   Alberigo, *Vatican II*, ii, pp. 171–2.

12   Ibid., i, p. 100.

13   Ibid., i, 102, 125 and 378.

14   Ibid., i, pp. 107, 117 and 128. Fuller accounts of the *vota* from India, China and Japan are to be found in: P. Pulikkan, 'Indian Bishops in the First Session: From a Slow Start to an Emerging Conciliar Ethos', in M. Fattori and A.

Melloni (eds), *Experience, Organisations and Bodies at Vatican II* (Leuven, 1999), pp. 87–95; A.S. Lazzarotto, 'I Vescovi Cinesi al Concilio', in ibid., pp. 70–72; A. Zambarbieri, 'Nota alla Participazione dei Vescovi del Giappone al Vaticano II, in ibid., pp. 126–8.

15 Pulikkan, 'Indian Bishops', pp. 95–6.

16 Alberigo, *Vatican II*, i, pp. 387–8.

17 There was also the 'Central Coordinating Commission', which was meant to coordinate the work of the ten commissions.

18 Alberigo, *Vatican II*, ii, pp. 26–30.

19 Ibid., ii, p. 42.

20 Ibid., ii, p. 44.

21 Ibid., ii, p. 42.

22 Ibid., ii, pp. 42 and 44; Pulikkan, 'Indian Bishops', p. 103 note 54; Lazzarotto, 'I Vescovi Cinesi', p. 72. The numbers given in the three works vary somewhat.

23 Pulikkan, 'Indian Bishops', p. 103 note 54.

24 Ibid., p. 98 note 38 and p.103 note 54.

25 Alberigo, *Vaticano II*, iv, p. 32.

26 Alberigo, *Vaticano II*, ii, pp. 56–7; Lazzarotto, 'I Vescovi Cinesi', p. 72.

27 Alberigo, *Vaticano II*, ii, pp. 48 and 58.

28 Ibid., ii, pp. 36, 172, 176–7, 191, 326–7, 461 and 464.

29 Ibid., ii, pp. 317–27 and 460–68.

30 Ibid., ii, pp. 176–7 and 191; Pulikkan, 'Indian Bishops', p. 104.

31 AIberigo, *Vatican II*, ii, pp. 199 and 219–21.

32 Ibid., ii, pp. 180–82; Pulikkan, 'Indian Bishops', p. 103 note 54.

33 Chapter 5, 'La chiesa nelle società: *ecclesia ad extra*', Alberigo, *Vaticano II*, iv. References are given in the footnotes to the full speeches as published in: *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II* (Vatican City, 1970–80). The chapter is forthcoming in English: Alberigo, *Vatican II*, vol. 4.

34 *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 2 (*Decrees*, ii, p. 1069).

35 AIberigo, *Vaticano II*, iv, pp. 353–4.

36 Ibid., iv, pp. 307, 309–13 and 315–17.

37 Ibid., iv, pp. 339 and 341.

38 Ibid., iv, 323, 327, 329–31 and 345–7.

39 Ibid., iv, pp. 333, 336–7 and 351.

40 Ibid., iv, pp. 320, 322 and 350–51.

41 Ibid., iv, pp. 323, 327, 333, 336 and 348–9.

42 Alberigo, *Vatican II*, iii, pp. 390–93 and 415–16; Alberigo, *Vaticano II,* iv, pp. 358–64.

43 Alberigo, *Vaticano II*, iv, pp. 365, 371–2 and 605–16.

44 Ibid., iv, pp. 366–8 and 370.

45 Ibid., iv, pp. 375–7, 379–80. 386–7, 389 and 391–2.

46 Ibid., iv, pp. 407 and 409–10.

47 *Acta Svnodalia*, as in p. 44 note 33 above.

48 For the continuing Asian contribution into the fourth and last session of the council in the autumn of 1965, see Alberigo, *Vaticano II*, vol. 5, passim.

49 For some of the work already done, see p. 40 note 14 above. Two further publications regrettably came to my attention too late for consideration: P. Pulikkan, *Indian Church at Vatican II: A Historical-Theological Study of the Indian Participation in the Second Vatican Council* (Trichur: Marynooth Publications, 2001); P.C. Phan, 'Reception of Vatican II in Asia: Historical and Theological Analysis', *Gregorianum*, 83 (2002), pp. 269–85.

WAS THE CHURCH TOO DEMOCRATIC?

List of Ecumenical and General Councils

1 For the meaning of 'ecumenical' and the establishment of the list of such councils, see pp. 64–65, 69, 74, and 113–15. For a fuller discussion, see Tanner, *Councils*, pp. 2–15 and 47–51.

Chapter 1: Councils and Collegiality in the Early Church: Ecumenical Councils

1 The eighth council, Constantinople IV in 869–70, is omitted from consideration. It was not accepted as ecumenical by the Eastern church and scholars of the Western church are divided about its status. See, Tanner, *Councils*, pp. 43 and 49, for a brief discussion of the point.

2 *Decrees*, p. 84.

3 Tanner, *Councils*, pp. 114–19; Tanner, *Asian Church*, pp. 85–6; see below pp. 105–8 and 118–19.

4 *Codex Iuris Canonici*, 1983, canons 337–41 and 749.

5 Principally for a chapter in vol. 4 of Alberigo, *Vatican II/Vaticano II*.

6 'The Origin of the Title "Oecumenical Council",' *Journal of Theological Studies*, 23 (1972), pp. 132–5.

7 *Decrees*, pp. 15 and 94.

8 Note, however, canon 4 of the Council of Chalcedon, which forbade monasteries to admit a slave as a monk without the written consent of his master (*Decrees*, p. 89).

9 *Decrees*, p. 8.

10 *Decrees*, pp. 10–13.

Chapter 2: Councils and Collegiality in the Early Church: Regional Councils

1 Much of what follows is taken from my talk, 'Regional Councils', at the

Conference, 'The Teaching Authority of Bishops', at Boston College, USA, in December 2001. A slightly revised version of the talk was published in *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1 (January 2003), pp. 141–53, and the extracts below are printed with the kind permission of its editor.

2 G.D. Mansi and others (eds), S*acrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, 53 vols (Florence, Venice, Paris, Leipzig, 1759–1927). Reprinted by Akademische Druck- und Verlaganstalt, Graz, 1960–62, with an index volume.

3 C. Munier (ed.), *Concilia Africae A.345–A.525*, Corpus Christianorum, series Latina, cxlix (Turnholt: Brepols, 1974); C. Munier (ed.), *Concilia Galliae A.314–A.506*, Corpus Christianorum, series Latina, cxlviii (Turnholt: Brepols, 1963); Clerq, C. de (ed.), *Concilia Galliae A.511–A.695*, Corpus Christianorum, series Latina, cxlviii A (Turnholt: Brepols, 1963).

4 *Decrees*, p. 8.

5 *Decrees*, p. 108.

6 Migne, *PG*, xlvi, col. 557.

Chapter 3: Middle Ages, Trent and After

1 For the status of the medieval and later councils, and whether they are better described as 'ecumenical' or 'general', see pp. 61–2, 113–15, 219 n.1. Hereafter in this chapter those of the Middle Ages are called general councils.

2 See above p. 72 note 2.

3 F.W. Powicke and C.R. Cheney (eds), *Councils & Synods, With Other Documents Relating to the English Church, II: A.D. 1204–1313*, 2 parts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964); M. Gibbs and J. Lang, *Bishops and Reform, 1215–1272*, *with special reference to the Lateran Council of 1215* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934).

4 For Constantinople IV, see above p. 61 note 1. The rejection of the council's ecumenicity by the Eastern church is unsurprising inasmuch as the main business was the deposition of Patriarch Photius of Constantinople, who was and remains venerated as a saint and great theologian in the East.

Chapter 4: Collegiality at Vatican II and After

1 Alberigo, *Vatican II/Vaticano II*, 5 vols. The relevant footnotes in the volumes provide references to the primary sources. It should be said that the work is, in general, enthusiastic about collegiality and not impartial. Nevertheless its coverage of the issue is extensive and factually reliable, it seems to me, howsoever the interpretations are judged.

2 *Votum*. In the time between the summoning of the council and its commencement, the preparatory commissions of the council invited all Catholic bishops and various institutions, such as Catholic universities, to submit in writing

proposals for the forthcoming council. The proposals of a given bishop or institution are called *votum* (plural, *vota*).

3 *Vatican II*, i, pp. 23 (Karrer), 69 and 120 (Alfrink), 475 (*Frankfurter* and *Le Monde*).

4 Ibid., i, p. 145.

5 Ibid., i, pp. 64 (Pius XII), 67 (Assumption), 67 (Pius X), 68 (regional councils).

6 Ibid., i, pp. 67 (Italy) and 69 (France).

7 Ibid., i, p. 69 and ii, p. 35.

8 The title of Prefect of the congregation was then held by the pope himself. The name of the congregation was later changed, after the council, to its present appellation, Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, CDF.

9 Ibid., ii, pp. 26–32.

10 *Periti* (singular, *peritus*) is a term for the theologians who accompanied and advised the bishops and other members of the council. Some were appointed by the pope, others were chosen by individual bishops. Though not strictly speaking members of the council and without the right to speak or vote in the council's formal debates, they could be members of the conciliar commissions and in this and other ways some of them – Karl Rahner SJ, Yves Congar OP and Monsignor Gérard Philips were the three most striking examples – wielded great influence.

11 Ibid., ii, pp. 36–40 (lists), 76 (Congar), and iv, pp. 306 and 398–9 (presidents).

12 Ibid., ii, p. 191; Tanner, *Asian Church*, pp. 66–8.

13 Alberigo, *Vatican II*, ii, pp. 191 (Cicognani) and 193 (Larraona).

14 Ibid., ii, pp. 281, 298 and 301.

15 Ibid., iii, pp. 64–70. See A. Acerbi, *Due ecclesiologie: Ecclesiologia giuridica ed ecclesiologia di comunione nella 'Lumen Gentium'* (Bologna, 1975), for a fuller treatment of the debate.

16 See references to 'Collegiality' in the Subject index, Alberigo, *Vatican II*, iii, p. 528.

17 Ibid., ii, p. 517, and iii, pp. 66 and 90.

18 Ibid., ii, pp. 210 (Browne), 491 (Cicognani), iii, pp. 81 (Fernandez), 103–4 (Staffa), 123 (MacIntyre), 127–32 (Del Pinto Gomez, Ottaviani, Browne, Lefebvre), 151 (Carli and *Coetus*).

19 Ibid., iii, pp. 67 (Van Dodewaard), 68 (Bettazzi), 104 (Kleutgen).

20 Ibid., iii, pp. 65 (Philips), 66 note 256 (Jedin), 85–6. (Tisserant), 99 note 399 (Parente), 104 (Colombo).

21 Ibid., iii, pp. 102–8.

22 Ibid., iii, pp. 107–8.

23 Ibid., iii, p. 423.

24 Ibid., iii, pp. 106, 365 and 420–21.

25 Alberigo, *Vaticano II*, iv, pp. 85–110.

26 Xavier Rynne, *The Third Session: The Debates and Decrees of Vatican Council II, September 14 to November 21, 1963* (London: Faber & Faber, 1964), p. 285.

27   Alberigo, *Vaticano II*, iv, pp. 446–75.

28   Ibid., iv, pp. 454–7, 462, 474–5.

29   For restraint on the involvement of theologians in collegiality, see: J. Grootaers, 'Un veto de Paul VI à la "Collegialité": Commission Théologique Internationale, 1970–1', *Oecumenica Civitas: Rivista del Centro di Documentazione del Movimento Ecumenico Italiano – Livorno*, 2 (2002), pp. 261–98.

30   According to John Allen (journalist of *National Catholic Reporter*), 'The Word from Rome', 16 May 2003 (internet report: www.TheWorldFromRome@natcath.org).

Chapter 5: Ecumenism, Inter-Religious Dialogue, and the Future: Part 1

1   Much of what follows in the two lectures is taken from my talk 'Ecumenism and the Ecumenical Councils' at the meeting of Jesuit Ecumenists in Alexandria, Egypt, in July 2001. The talk was published, under the same title, in: (1) *Hekima Review*, 29 (May 2003), pp. 7–19; (2) T. Michel (ed.), *Ecumenism: Hopes and Challenges for the New Century* (Secretariat for Interreligious Dialogue, Curia SJ, CP 6139, 00195 Rome. 2003), pp. 88–92. The extracts here are reproduced by courtesy of the editor of *Hekima Review* and Tom Michel SJ.

2   For the most important letters in the correspondence between Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius, see *Decrees*, pp. 40–61. Photius's encyclical letter is given in Migne, PG, 102, cols 724–32; see also, H.J. Hefele and H. Leclerq, *Histoire des Conciles* (Paris, 1907–52), iv, part A, pp. 444–6.

3   Published by Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore, in 2002.

4   M.L. West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); W. Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (Harvard University Press, 1992). See also E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (University of California Press, 1959).

5   Tanner, *Asian Church*, chapter 2.

6   Ibid., pp. 50–59.

7   For this fifth reflection, see: N. Tanner, 'The African Contribution to the First Five Ecumenical Councils', *Afer* (*African Ecclesial Review*), 33 (1991), pp. 190–201.

Chapter 6: Ecumenism, Inter-Religious Dialogue and the Future: Part 2

1   *Decrees*, p. 442.

2   V. Peri, 'Il numero dei concili ecumenici nella tradizione cattolica moderna', *Aevum*, 37 (1963), pp. 473–5. L.M. Bermejo, *Church Conciliarity and Communion* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1990), pp. 77–8.

3 Entitled: *Τὴν ἁγίων οἰκουμενικὴν συνόδων τῆς καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας ἅπαντα: Concilia generalia Ecclesiae catholicae Pauli V pontificis maximi auctoritate edita.*

4 Even though the Greek part of the title spoke of 'ecumenical' and the Latin 'general' (thus cleverly sliding over the possible distinction between the two words), 'ecumenical' thereafter came to be the preferred term.

5 'Structures ecclésiales et conciles dans les relations entre Orient et Occident', *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 58 (1974), pp. 355–90.

6 *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 66 (1974), p. 620.

7 See above p. 101–2.

8 J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), pp. 198–200 (lecture originally delivered in Graz, Austria, in 1976). He later drew back somewhat from the conclusion: *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (Slough: St Paul Publications, 1988), pp. 80–83.

9 Peter Hebblethwaite, the distinguished religious journalist and author of biographies of two recent popes: *John XXIII: Pope of the Council* (London, 1984); and, *Paul VI: The First Modern Pope* (London, 1993). Only in the brief reign of John XXIII were his aspirations for the papacy realised; though towards the end of his life he became appreciative of Paul VI. Normally he seemed disheartened by the perceived failures of the papacy.

10 *Decrees*, pp. 125, 135 and 162.

11 *Decrees*, pp. 191–2, 233–5, 267–71, 297–301, 309–12, 350–54, 609–14 and 650–55. In all the councils in question the pope played a leading role in the drafting and promulgation of the decrees.

12 *Decrees*, pp. 233–5, 237–9 and 380–83.

13 *Decrees*, p. 816.

14 The decree, in its treatment and ordering of the Church, puts the people of God before the hierarchy.

15 *Decrees*, p. 108.

16 See pp. 104–5.

17 For example, J.R. Quinn, *The Reform of the Papacy: The Costly Call to Christian Unity* (New York: Crossroad, 1999). See above p. 77.

18 See pp. 68–69 and 75.

Article 1: The African Church and the First Five Ecumenical Councils

1 'Africa Synod: Lineamenta and Questions', published in full in AFER: *African Ecclesial Review*, vol. 33, nos 2 and 3 (February/April 1991).

2 Ibid., p. 3.

3 According to the traditional enumeration: Nicaea I in 325, Constantinople I in

381, Ephesus in 431, Chalcedon in 451, and Constantinople II in 553. Recent treatments of the five councils, and of the African contribution to them, may be found in: H. Jedin (ed.), *History of the Church* (London, 1980), vol. 2; G. Dumeige (ed), *Histoire des Conciles Oecuméniques*, vols 1 (I. Ortiz de Urbina, 1963), 2 (P.-Th. Camelot, 1961) and 3 (F. Murphy and P. Sherwood, 1974); W. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (London, 1984); R. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381* (Edinburgh, 1988). The text of the councils' decrees and an English translation are in Tanner, *Decrees*. See also J. Hildebrandt, *History of the Church in Africa*: A Survey (Africa Christian Press, Achimota, . . .).

4 It should be noted that in the early Church there was no difference between a synod and a council. That is to say, the Greek word 'synod' and the Latin word 'concilium' were synonymous.

5 Our knowledge of their role is somewhat imprecise because the council's official records – if any such records were compiled, which is unclear – do not survive.

6 Constantinople I's record of the text of N-C does not survive.

7 Tanner, *Decrees*, p. 84.

8 'Africa Synod', p. 6.

9 See: Tanner, *Decrees*, pp 1192–3; *Concilia Africae*, ed. E. Munier (Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, 149; 1973): H. Percival, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church* (The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd series, 14; 1900 and 1983), pp. 437–510 and 515–19.

10 Tanner, *Decrees*, p. 108. Scripture passages from Proverbs 18, 19, Ecclesiastes 4, 9, and Matthew 18, 19–20.

Article 2: The Eucharist in the Ecumenical Councils

1 The paper was originally read as, 'Sacred Materiality: The Eucharist and Church Councils', at the conference, 'The material culture of Christianity: A millennium conference exploring the role of objects and artefacts throughout the history of Christianity', which was held at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 5–6 May 2000. It appears here by courtesy of Dr Andrew Spirit, of the same Museum, organiser of the conference. The proceedings of the conference have not been published but the present paper was published separately in *Gregorianum*, 82 (2001), pp. 37–49.

2 References to the conciliar decrees below are taken from N. Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Georgetown University Press, 1990) = *Decrees*.

3 *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* (Paris, 1903–50), vol. 5, cols 1287–93.

4 Quoted in W. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1955), pp. 164–5.

5 See especially, H. Jedin, *Geschichte des Konzils von Trient* (Freiburg, 1951–75), vol. 3, book 4, chapter 2, book 5, chapters 3 and 6, vol. 4, book 6, chapters 8 and 9.

6   H. Vorgrimler (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (London and New York, 1967–79), vol. I, pp. 1–10 and 31–56; G. Alberigo and J. Komonchak (eds), *History of Vatican II* (Orbis USA and Peeters, Leuven, 1996–), vol. 2, chapter 2, and vol. 3, chapter 3.

Article 3: Mary in the Ecumenical Councils of the Church

1   This paper was originally given at the ESBVM (Ecumenical Society of the Blesssed Virgin Mary) Oxford Congress in August 2000.

2   References to the conciliar decrees below are taken from N. Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols with continuous pagination (London, Sheed & Ward; Washington USA, Georgetown University Press 1990) = *Decrees*.

'Synod' (Greek, σύνοδος) and 'council' (Latin, *concilium*) are synonymous terms, though recently a distinction has been introduced in Roman Catholic canon law (formalised in the 1983 revised Code of Canon Law, canons 342–8), between 'ecumenical councils' (such as Vatican II), which have executive and legislative powers, and 'synods of bishops', which may be consulted by the pope and have only an advisory role. In this paper 'council' will be used throughout since it is the more usual word in English.

For the list of councils recognised as ecumenical by the Roman Catholic Church and for earlier and recent discussion of this list within the church, see N. Tanner, *Councils of the Church: A Short History* (Crossroad USA, 2001).

3   *Decrees*, p. 5.

4   J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (3rd edn, London 1972), chapters 4–7.

5   *Decrees*, p. 24

6   R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–81* (Edinburgh 1988), pp. 812–13; J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (3rd edn, London 1972), pp. 296–301.

7   *Decrees*, pp. 83–4.

8   M. Starowieyski, 'Le titre Θεοτόκος avant le concile d'Ephèse', in E.A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica*, 19 (Louvain 1989), pp. 136–42; *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* (Paris 1903–50), book 9, part 2, cols 2351–4.

9   *Decrees*, pp. 69–70.

10   *Decrees*, pp. 69–74.

11   *Decrees*, pp. 83–5.

12   *Decrees*, p. 113.

13   *Decrees*, p. 127.

14   *Decrees*, pp. 135–6.

15   *Decrees*, p. 136.

16   *Decrees*, p. 134.

17   See Tanner, *Councils of the Church* (forthcoming).

18 For occasional references to Mary in the decrees of these medieval councils, see *Decrees*, pp. 230, 360, 573–4, 579, 588 and 590 (as indicated under Index of Subjects, 'Mary', ibid., pp. 1303–4).

19 'Nos . . . doctrinam illam disserentem gloriosam virginem Dei genitricem Mariam, praeveniente et operante divini numinis gratia singulari, nunquam actualiter subjacuisse originali peccato, sed immunem semper fuisse ab omni originali et actuali culpa, sanctamque et immaculatam, tanquam piam et consonam cultui ecclesiastico, fidei catholicae, recta rationi et sacrae Scripturae, ab omnibus catholicis approbandam fore, tenendam et amplectandam, diffinimus et declaramus, nullique de cetero licitum esse in contrarium praedicare seu docere.' G. Mansi and others (eds), *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* (Florence etc., 1759–1927), vol. 29, cols 182–3.

20 J. Galot, 'L'Immaculée Conception', in H. du Manoir (ed.), *Maria* (Paris 1949–64), vol. 7, pp. 71–9; *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* (Paris 1903–50), book 7, part 1, cols 1108–15.

21 *Decrees*, pp. 774–5.

22 Decree on original sin (17 June 1546, session 5), chapter 6: *Decrees*, p. 667.

23 Canons concerning justification (13 January 1547, session 6), canon 23: *Decrees,* p. 680.

24 No. 62 of the decree: *Decrees*, p. 895.

25 *Decrees*, pp. 891–8, as well as numerous other versions, for an English translation of the chapter. For the history of the discussions about Mary at the council, see especially: H. Vorgrimler (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (London and New York, 1967–79), vol. 1, pp. 285–96; G. Alberigo (ed.), *History of Vatican II* (Leuven and Maryknoll 1965–), vol. 2, pp. 480–81, vols 3 and 4 (see under 'Mary' in Index of Subjects) forthcoming in English and already published in Italian (*Storia del concilio Vaticano II*).

Article 4: The Historiography of Vatican II in the Anglophone World

This chapter was first given as a lecture at the Lateran University in Rome under the title 'La storiografia del Concilio: l'area anglosassone'. It was published under the same title in the University's journal *Centro Vaticano II: Bollettino semestrale*, 2 (2002), pp. 47–54.

Article 5: Ecumenism and the Ecumenical Councils

1 This essay was first delivered in the form of a lecture at the meeting of Jesuit Ecumenists in Alexandria, Egypt, in July 2001. The audience and the late hour of the session, after dinner, account for its colloquial and familiar style. It seems better to reproduce the paper as it was given than to adopt a more formal style.

The talk was subsequently published, substantially unaltered, as 'Ecumenism and the Ecumenical Councils' in *Hekima Review* (Nairobi, Kenya), no. 29 (May 2003), pp. 7–19.

2   The following 21 according to the traditional list of the Roman Catholic Church: Nicaea I (325), Constantinople I (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), Constantinople II (553), Constantinople III (680–81), Nicaea II (787), Constantinople IV (869–70), Lateran I (1123), Lateran II (1139), Lateran III (1179), Lateran IV (1215), Lyons I (1245), Lyons II (1274), Vienne (1311–12), Constance (1414–17), Basel-Florence (1431–45), Lateran V (1512–7), Trent (1545–63), Vatican I (1869–70), Vatican II (1962–65).

3   *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols (London and Washington DC: Sheed & Ward/Continuum and Georgetown University Press, 1990). Abbreviated henceforth to *Decrees*.

4   *The Councils of the Church: A Short History* (New York: Crossroad/Herder, 2001). Abbreviated henceforth to: Tanner, *Councils*. Also in Italian, *I concili della chiesa* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1999), and French, *Conciles et synodes* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2000).

5   I leave out of consideration the fourth Council of Constantinople in 869–70. Although it took place before the schism, it was not accepted as ecumenical by the Eastern church and scholars of the Western church are divided about its ecumenical status. See, Tanner, *Councils*, pp. 43 and 49, for a brief discussion of the point.

6   The terms 'Nestorian' and 'Monophysite' are used here for the sake of convenience and with some reluctance, since they are/were not normally acknowledged by the churches in question.

7   See below under no. 5, 'Formula *versus* Content' pp. 168–9, for more on this point.

8   This reflection has been developed in the booklet (above pp. 1–53) *Is the Church too Asian?*

9   M.L. West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997). W. Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (Harvard University Press, 1992). See also E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (University of California Press, 1959).

10   *Decrees*, p. 442.

11   V. Peri, 'Il numero dei concili ecumenici nella tradizione cattolica moderna', *Aevum*, 37 (1963), pp. 473–5. L.M. Bermejo, *Church Conciliarity and Communion* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1990), pp. 77–8.

12   Entitled, *Των ἁγίων οἰκουμενικων συνόδων τῆς καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας ἄπαντα: Concilia generalia Ecclesiae catholicae Pauli V pontificis maximi auctoritate edita*.

13   Even though the Greek part of the title spoke of 'ecumenical' and the Latin 'general', thus cleverly sliding over the possible distinction between the two words, 'ecumenical' came to be the preferred term thereafter.

14 'Structures ecclésiales et conciles dans les relations entre Orient et Occident', *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 58 (1974), pp. 355–90.

15 *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 66 (1974), p. 620

16 Peter Hebblethwaite, the distinguished religious journalist and author of biographies of two recent popes: *John XXIII: Pope of the Council* (London, 1984); and *Paul VI: The First Modern Pope* (London, 1993), Only in the brief reign of John XXIII were his aspirations for the papacy realised; though towards the end of his life he became appreciative of Paul VI. Normally he seemed disheartened by the perceived failures of the papacy.

17 *Decrees*, pp. 125, 135 and 162.

18 *Decrees*, pp. 191–2, 233–5, 267–71, 297–301, 309–12, 350–54, 609–14 and 650–55. In all these councils the pope played a leading role in the drafting and promulgation of the decrees.

19 *Decrees*, pp. 233–5, 237–9 and 380–83.

20 *Decrees*, p. 816.

21 This decree, in its treatment and ordering of the Church, puts the people of God before the hierarchy.

22 *Decrees*, p. 108.

23 For example, J.R. Quinn, *The Reform of the Papacy: The Costly Call to Christian Unity* (New York: Crossroad, 1999).

Article 6: The Book of the Councils:
Nicaea I to Vatican II

1 'Council' and 'synod' are synonymous; 'council' will normally be used in this paper because it is more usual in English. The distinction between 'ecumenical' and 'general' councils should become apparent in due course.

2 See *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, edited by F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, 3rd edn. revised, 1997, 'Oecumenical Councils', p. 1175.

3 References below to the conciliar decrees are taken from, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman P. Tanner, 2 vols (London and Washington DC, 1990) [hereafter *Decrees*].

4 *Decrees*, 1, p. 3; G.L. Dossetti, *Il simbolo di Nicaea e di Costantinopoli* (Rome, 1967), passim.

5 Cf. Henryk Pietras, forthcoming article in *Gregorianum* (probably January 2001).

6 J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd edn (London, 1972), pp. 254–62.

7 R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–381* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp. 812–20.

8 *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum*, ed. E. Schwartz and others (Berlin and Leipzig, 1914–), book 1 (5 parts); *Éphèse et Chalcédoine: Actes des conciles*, ed. and trans. A.J. Festugière (Paris, 1982).

9 Henry Chadwick, 'The Origin of the Title "Oecumenical Council"', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 23 (1972), pp. 132–5.

10 *Decrees*, 1, pp. 7–16; though 'ecumenical' appears in one manuscript for canon 13 (*Decrees*, 1, p. 12).

11 *Decrees*, 1, p. 29.

12 *Decrees*, 1, p. 83.

13 *Decrees*, 1, pp. 83–5.

14 *Decrees*, 1, pp. 85–6.

15 *Decrees*, 1, pp. 108–9, 124–5 and 134–5.

16 *Decrees*, 1, pp. 157–8; V. Peri, 'C'è un concilio oecumenico ottavo?', *Annuarium historiae conciliorum*, 8 (1976), pp. 52–79.

17 Luis M. Bermejo, *Church, Conciliarity and Communion* (Anand, 1990), pp. 68–90.

18 Bermejo, *Church*, pp. 77–8.

19 *Decrees*, 1, p. 442.

20 For a fuller review of the scholarship, see Norman P. Tanner, *The Councils of the Church: A Short History* (Crossroad, New York, 2001).

21 *Decrees* is the original English bilingual edition.

22 V. Peri, 'Il Numero dei concili ecumenici nella tradizione cattolica moderna', *Aevum*, 37 (1963), pp. 433–501; Yves Congar, 'Structures ecclésiales et conciles dans les relations entre Orient et Occident', *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 58 (1974), pp. 355–90.

23 *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 66 (1974), p. 620.

Article 7: Ecumenical Councils and Non-Christian Religions

1 'Non-Christian religions' seems a negative and much too collective description for the richness and variety of the world's religions. However, it is used in this essay only on account of its brevity and for want of anything better.

2 Nicaea I (325), Constantinople I (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), Constantinople II (553), Constantinople III (680–81), Nicaea II (787), Constantinople IV (869–70), Lateran I (1123), Lateran II (1139), Lateran IV (1179), Lateran IV (1215), Lyons I (1245), Lyons II (1274), Vienne (1311–12), Constance (1414–18), Basel-Florence (1431–45), Trent (1545–63), Vatican I (1869–70), Vatican II (1962–65). 'Ecumenical' comes from the Greek word οἰκουμενική, 'pertaining to the whole world'. When applied to councils, it refers to assemblies that represent the whole church.

3 On these points, see N. Tanner, *The Councils of the Church: A Short History* (New York: Crossroad, 2001), pp. 47–51 and 75–6.

4 *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. N. Tanner (London and Washington USA, 1990), i, pp. 5 and 24. Hereafter abbreviated to: *Decrees*. The texts in their original Greek or Latin may be found in this bilingual edition, facing each page of the English translation: they carry the same pagination.

5 Ibid., i, pp. 15 and 35.

6   Ibid., i, p. 12.

7   Ibid., pp. 54 and 70–71.

8   Ibid., i, pp. 77–78 and 81.

9   Ibid., i, p. 84.

10 Ibid., i, pp. 120, 124, 146 and 161.

11 See N. Tanner, 'The Eucharist in the Ecumenical Councils', *Gregorianum*, 82 (2001), pp. 38–41.

12 *Decrees*, i, p. 230.

13 Ibid., p. 233.

14 Ibid., i, p. 578; see also pp. 575–6.

15 Ibid., i, pp. 265–71, 297–301 and 309–14, 350–54, 609–14 and 650–55.

16 Ibid., i, pp. 379–80.

17 Ibid., i, pp. 483–5.

18 Ibid., i, p. 297.

19 For a fuller exposition of the points raised in this paragraph, see: N. Tanner, *Is the Church too Asian?*, pp. 44–7.

20 Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, Long Text, chapter 27.

21 J. Gill, *The Council of Florence* (Cambridge, 1959), p. 326; ibid., *Constance et Bâle-Florence*, Histoire des Conciles Oecuméniques, ed. G. Dumeige, vol. 9 (Paris, 1965), p. 268. Different numbers for those signing the decree are given in the two works.

22 *Decrees*, ii, pp. 666 and 685.

23 Ibid., ii, p.685.

24 Ibid., ii, pp. 671–81, especially chs 1–3 and 5.

25 Ibid., ii, pp. 811–16.

26 For the history of the decree, see G. Alberigo (ed.), *History of Vatican II* (Maryknoll: Orbis, and Leuven: Peeters, 1995–), iii, pp. 275–6, 283–4, 378–80, 430–32 and 505, and the relevant pages in vols iv and v (forthcoming in English; already published in Italian, *Storia del concilio Vaticano II*).

Article 8: The Image of John XXIII and Paul VI in the Anglo-Saxon World during and after Vatican II

1   P. Hebblethwaite, *John XXIII: Pope of the Council* (London, 1984), p. 105. Henceforth abbreviated to: Hebblethwaite, *John XXIII*.

2   Ibid., pp. 54, 117, 240 (Borromeo), 56–60 (Baronius).

3   *Journal of a Soul*, translated by D. White (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1965), p. 181. Original in *Il Giornale dell'Anima e altri scritti di pietà* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1964), p. 128: 'Eppure questo uomo, tuttoché protestante, qualche cosa di veramente buono l'ha fatto qui in Roma. E che cosa ha fatto? Rendendosi superiore a certe voglie tendenziose dell'anticlericalismo italiano e straniero, egli nel fastigio della sua grandezza non si vergognò, anzi se l'ebbe ad

onore, di visitare e di chinarsi davanti ad un altro uomo, ad un povero vecchio perseguitato, ma che egli ha riconsciuto siccome più grande di sé: davanti al papa, al vicario di Gesù Cristo . . . fatto altamente figurativo, questo, di un re eretico dell'Inghilterra protestante e da più che tre secoli persecutrice della Chiesa cattolica, che va a presentare personalmente i suoi omaggi al povero vecchio papa, tenuto come prigioniero in casa sua.'

4   P. Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI: The First Modern Pope* (London, 1993), p. 127. Henceforth abbreviated to: Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*. For the original Italian of the quotation, see: Giovanni Baptista Montini, *Lettere ai Familiari 1919–1943*, ed. N. Vian (Brescia: Istituto Paolo VI, 1986), p. 794.

5   Ibid., pp. 135, 142, 146 and 205; O. Chadwick, *Britain and the Vatican during the Second World War* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 127–8 and see entries under 'Montini' in index.

6   Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, pp. 267–71 and 714.

7   Ibid., p. 270; O. Chadwick, *Michael Ramsey: A Life* (Oxford, 1990), p. 317.

8   Greene was to be received in private audience by Paul VI in 1965, a meeting he (Greene) greatly appreciated: Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, pp. 15–16 and photograph between pp. 502 and 503.

9   Hebblethwaite, *John XXIII*, p. 296.

10 Ibid., pp. 303–5.

11 Ibid., pp. 383–4.

12 *Letters from Vatican City* (London and New York, 1963), *The Second Session* (London and New York, 1964), *The Third Session* (London and New York, 1965), *The Fourth Session* (London and New York, 1966). His single volume summary was published soon afterwards: *Vatican Council II* (New York, 1968; new edition, 1999).

13 The book appeared under two titles: *Pope, Council and World: The Story of Vatican II* (New York, 1963); *Inside the Council: The Story of Vatican II* (London, 1963).

14 There was a special irony in his name, John. There was only one English king called John – as anglophones knew from their schooldays – 'bad' King John who oppressed his people and was forced into agreeing to the famous charter of Anglo-Saxons liberties, 'Magna Carta' of 1215. Now this sad king seemed to be redeemed by his namesake pope.

15 *Time*, 31 December 1962; Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, p. 468.

16 Hebblethwaite, *John XXIII*, pp. 362, 491 and 498; O. Chadwick, *The Christian Church in the Cold War* (London, 1992), p. 117.

17 Hebblethwaite, *John XXIII*, pp. 445–6 and 496.

18 Ibid., p. 436; D. Horton, *Vatican Diary 1962: A Protestant Observes the First Session of Vatican Council II* (Philadelphia, 1964); J. Moorman, *Vatican Observed: An Anglican Impression of Vatican II* (London, 1967), p. 32.

19 J.C. Heenan, *A Crown of Thorns: An Autobiography 1951–1963* (London, 1974), pp. 323–4.

20 *Journal of a Soul*, translated by D. White (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1965 and numerous reprints); Hebblethwaite, *John XXIII*.

21 G. Alberigo and J. Komonchak (eds), *History of Vatican II*, vol. 1 (Maryknoll and Leuven, 1995), chapter 3 (pp. 167–356). Italian version = G. Alberigo and A. Melloni (eds), *Storia del concilio Vaticano II* (Bologna, 1996–2001).

22 In the question-time following the lecture, Monsignor Pasquale Macchi, former Private Secretary of Paul VI, told the audience that John XXIII had never made the alleged remark and was upset when it was attributed to him. It was made, he said, by a curial official whose name was not divulged.

23 G. Fogarty, *The Vatican and the American Hierarchy from 1870 to 1965* (Wilmington, 1985), p. 398.

24 For the USA bishops and Pope Paul's handling of the decree on religious freedom, see especially, Fogarty, *The Vatican and the American Hierarchy*, pp. 370, 381–3 and 395–403.

25 For the extent of dissent in USA and its effects see: A.M. Greeley, *Religious Change in America* (Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 47–52 and 70–75.

26 Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, pp. 436, 460, 506, 512 and 557. For President Eisenhower's appreciation of him and their meeting in Notre Dame College, Indiana, USA, in 1960, before Montini became pope, see ibid., p. 294.

27 J. Moorman, *Vatican Observed: An Anglican View of Vatican II* (London, 1967), pp. 32 and passim. Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, pp. 267, 336–7 and 404–6. Ibid., p. 406, for the remark attributed to Paul by Pawley during his private audience with the pope at the end of the third session of the council: 'I think Anglicans often understand what is going on among us better than anyone else.'

28 Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, pp. 460–6; Chadwick, *Michael Ramsey*, pp. 318–23.

29 *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 62 (1970), pp. 753. This part of the homily was delivered in English. There is an ambiguity, perhaps intentional, as to whether the two churches are already sisters or whether they will be only when reunion is accomplished.

30 *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 69 (1977), p. 284. The address was given in English.

31 Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, p. 568.

32 B. Friedan, 'A Visit with Pope Paul', *McCall's*, February 1974, pp. 72–80. Quoted in Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, pp. 638–9 and 656.

33 *The Times*, 4 June 1975. Quoted in Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, pp. 638 and 656.

34 Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, pp. 535–8 and 564–9.

35 See notes 1 and 4 for the two biographies.

Article 9: Greek Metaphysics and the Language of the Early Church Councils: Nicaea I (325) to Nicaea II (787)

1 See H. Liddell and R. Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon,* Oxford 1968, p. 1227.

Index of Persons

Index of Modern Scholars (*c.* 1750–)

Index of Councils

The 21 councils which are generally recognised by the Catholic Church as ecumenical (or general) councils are listed above on p. 60. They are printed here in bold type. Regarding the Notes (pp. 219–237), page-references are provided in this Index only when a note contains substantive information about a council.